

ERNEST HEMINGWAY—Portrait of a Man—See Page 7

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

25c
JULY



"FORBIDDEN TRAILS"
True Book Length Escape from Devil's Island
by RENE BELBENOIT—author of "Dry Guillotine"

Who wrote what
in this month's
Bluebook

Purely Personal

Ordinarily, we turn down stories in which prizefighters talk to mice, and vice versa, so fast we have them back to the author in the next mail. But we think you'll agree there's something about John Novotny's "Cecil and Benny" (pages 45-49) that calls for a revision in the usual procedure. Maybe it's something called charm.

Anyway, John, who lives on a plot of dandelions and crabgrass out on Long Island, says nothing in his biography about knowing any mice that talk, and,



for Long Island, that's pretty unusual in itself. He was born in Brooklyn, however, and that could explain a lot.

A retired veteran (Staff Sergeant) of the Pacific campaign, John works as an inspector in an instrument plant in his daylight hours, and spends his evenings "diapering our five-months-old son, and writing."

* * *

A native of Amsterdam (the one in Holland, not New York), J. L. Bouma, who wrote this month's novelette, "Wagons—Roll!" (pages 28-37), came to this country when he was 8, and soon after made the long trek to San Pedro, California.

"The journey across the country was most impressive," he writes. "The sight of endless plains, sweeping forests and towering mountains filled me with awe and wonder. The awe didn't diminish with time, and the wonder increased that people once made this same journey in wagons, facing hardships and despair, and succeeding because of their dogged

will. Now, one can make the same long, hard trek only in the mind, and attempt to transfer it to paper."

A veteran of the Italian campaign (a flyer on B-24s), Bouma got the writing bug six years ago while working on a California ranch. He expects to hold onto it as long as possible.

* * *

Michael Sheridan once lived for three years in a trailer, so he was the logical one to do our trailer story, "Let's Live in a Trailer!" (pages 68-73). "My mobile home," Mike says, "was perched on a cliff overlooking the ocean at Laguna Beach, California, and I had the most fabulous view in the world—until another trailer-owner moved in and parked right in front of me. End of view and end of my trailer-living."

But it's still a wonderful way to live, Mike says, even if he does spend his time now in a New York apartment. And he hopes some day to go back to the nomadic existence of the trailerites, if he ever sells enough to *Bluebook* to afford to buy a house on wheels.



A native of London, Mike came to America in 1932, wrote for the movies and the stage, and now devotes his full time to magazines. Witness pages 68-73.

* * *

Harold Mehling was born in California, Harry Kursh was born in New York, and their idea for an article on vending machines ("The Biggest Small

Business in the World," (pages 38-44) was born on a Navy patrol bomber on which Mehling was riding, 10,000 feet up, when he ran out of cigarettes. His suggestion that cigarette-vending machines be installed on all Navy planes had not been adopted by the Defense Department as we went to press.

Mehling and Kursh now write as a team out of New York City, both are ex-Navy joes, and both are enthusiastic vending-machine fans, as their piece in this issue testifies. It's a bet you'll be the same after you read it.

* * *

René Belbenoit, author of this month's book-lengther, "Forbidden Trails" (pages 92-128) hardly needs to be introduced to the American reading public; his powerful indictment of France's penal colony on Devil's Island—"Dry Guillotine"—was a runaway best-seller a few years ago. Now he's done the amazing, fascinating story of his successful escape from the island in "Forbidden Trails," a sure-fire bet to duplicate the success of his first book.



Born in Paris 54 years ago, Belbenoit, after serving in the French Army in WW I, stole to get enough money to eat, was arrested in Paris, and sentenced to Devil's Island. He served his time, but, under the island's penal code, never could get back to France. He therefore dedicated himself to attempts to escape, the last of five being successful and resulting in "Forbidden Trails."

COMING UP



How long we're going to be able to keep this up, of course, no one can tell. But the fact remains that every time we look forward to next month's issue, it seems to be five times better than anything we've done in the past. And now here we are with the line-up for August, and—well, sir, it sure is astounding.

Just take a look:

OFF LIMITS FOR LIFE, by Arthur Winston
America's 10,000 World War II deserters—and their tragic fate.

GIVE IT BACK TO THE INDIANS!
A critic takes a healthy swing at that big-city madness.

I RACE WITH DEATH! by Guy Lombardo
What it's like to hit 100 mph in a speedboat.

WHAT IS A MAN? by Maxwell Hamilton
The answer will surprise a lot of people!

AND THEN I WROTE A BEST-SELLER!
A guy who did gives you the low-down on what it did to his life.

THE SIREN OF SACRIFICE SHOALS
Or what to do with a goddess your wife doesn't like.

IVERNON'S IDIOT
He was baseball's greatest rookie, with just one minor defect.

PIGS FOR MIKE HARLOWE
And between the Government and the porkers, Mike had his hands full.

JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS
The trouble is, in Russia it's hard to tell friends from enemies.

SHOWDOWN AT SUNSET
A Western with that rare element, a new twist.

PORTRAIT OF LILLY
A word-picture of a 14-carat witch, and the guy who almost married her.

LOOPHOLE
Book-length novel about smugglers, who brought in dope by the truckload.

All this, and a lot more, in the big August *Bluebook*. It'll be on sale July 29th.

JULY, 1953

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

July, 1953

MAGAZINE

Trademark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

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PHILLIPS WYMAN, Publisher

• MAXWELL HAMILTON •

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LEN ROMAGNA
Art Editor

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Assistant Editor

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The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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PRO and CON

Address all letters to: THE EDITOR, Bluebook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. All letters must be signed. None can be acknowledged or returned.

Bum Steer

To the Editor:

I know all the shooting's over on your "Women Are Lousy Drivers" story (Jan. *Bluebook*), but I think there's still time to run the following, a clipping from the *New York World-Telegram and Sun*:

"The trouble with women drivers is that they can't steer straight, the Automobile Club of New York has concluded.

"The club gave tests to men and women drivers at the International Motor Sports Show. It found that women are likely to slam on the brakes faster than men—but when it comes to steering, ouch!

"Out of 112 women tested, 31 percent of them could not drive in a

straight line, the club reported. Only 11 percent of 435 men flunked that test."

Tom Solters.

Roslyn, N. Y.

Worthy Thought

To the Editor:

I am very much interested in giving blood to the Red Cross for the Armed Forces. I gave five pints last year and one so far this year.

I am also much disturbed over the small number of people who are giving this vital life supply to the blood bank. Here in Albany, it is rarely that the quota of 100 pints is reached. Yet I feel it is not reluctance on the part of the public, but the American trait of putting it off until next week.

Accordingly, I have an idea: Why don't you insert a coupon in *Bluebook* that a donor could fill out when he donates blood, and which could be certified by the bank or laboratory where the donation is made. The coupon then could be mailed in to you, you could keep a box score, and, since many of your readers are servicemen, the latter would learn from the pages of *Bluebook* that we here at home are doing our part.

It doesn't matter to me how the idea is set up; all I care about is seeing that we get more blood.

Preston M. Evans,
Major, USAFR.

Albany, N. Y.

A swell idea, Pres, and one we're working on. And any readers who have any ideas on the subject, shoot 'em in, huh? This is mighty important. —Ed.

Including the Scandinavian

To the Editor:

In the February issue there appeared a letter headed "Sour Grapes" and signed by Mr. H. Flaherty.

Like Mr. Flaherty, I have, for more years than I care to think of, been a constant reader and subscriber. And I am sorry to say I most heartily share Mr. Flaherty's sentiments as expressed in his letter. There have been fewer and fewer stories (in *Bluebook*) that I have cared to read, and in the February number there wasn't one I was able to finish. Not even the one about *Michael Shane*, which seemed to me to be a very poor imitation of the improbable *Ferry Mason*.

I regret I shall have to ask you to cross my name from your subscription list.

Capt. Ole Bull.

Oslo, Norway.

Ole! And that was the issue we knocked ourselves out to get you old-timers one of your beloved Snake River Jim stories! And now you say you couldn't finish it. We're hurt, Ole, really hurt. —Ed.

On the Other Hand . . .

To the Editor:

Having read *Bluebook* for more than 25 years, and all the pros and cons in the later issues, I don't see what anyone has to gripe about.

Whereinell can anyone get a mag like BB for two bits? No ads, solid reading from cover to cover, and, last but not least, the book-lengthier alone is worth two bits.

J. W. Prouty.

Auburn, Calif.

Attaboy, J.W.! —Ed.



Bowed Down

To the Editor:

Have just read Andrew Hamilton's "Bows Are Best" (April *Bluebook*).

As an archer, I am deeply impressed by not finding a single misstatement in the whole article. Most of us wince these days when we read one of the usual sensational and often "fictional" fact articles on archery in our popular magazines. Sure, such stories have to be dramatized for reader interest, but a real archer understands and appreciates Hamilton's story. And reading that kind of story, a beginner can begin to understand what archery means to the sportsman.

Thanks for a real treat.

George Brommers.

Bellevue, Wash.

To the Editor:

... the author states that "the bow and arrow is recognized as a legal weapon in every State in the Union."

According to my new edition of the handbook of the National Field Archery Association, the bow is not legal in North Carolina, but hunting is allowed in the Pisgah National Forest under the auspices of the U. S. Forest Service. In North Dakota, the bow is also illegal.

Duane Otis.

San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editor:

On your April cover, with the man holding the bow in his left hand, the arrow should be on the right side of the bow, resting on a specially-made notch, or on his fingers—instead of the back of his hand, as you've shown it.

Kenney Linn.

Delta, Col.

To the Editor:

In your April issue, you said you planned to enroll your cover artist in the Snake-of-the-Month Club (for his boo on the January painting). You'd better enroll him, also, in the Bear-of-the-Month Club, for that cover on the April issue.

The archer shown shooting the arrow cross-handed, as he is in the picture, will miss the bear at least a foot. The arrow should be on the right side of the bow.

Bernard Coady.

Taylorville, Ill.

The artist says you two guys are the wrong 'uns this time. The arrow belongs exactly where he's put it, on the outside of the bow from the hand holding the arrow. You do it the other way, this amazing man snarls, and you got no control whatever. The artist is 6 feet 3 inches tall and he weighs 195 pounds, which is authority enough for us. —Ed.

Exercised

To the Editor:

I realize the energy required to write this is enough to make the old ticker conk out (see "Relax and Enjoy It," by George Scullin, March *Bluebook*), but after reading that piece I felt I had to write.

It's easy for a man to write about something he doesn't know anything about, and it's evident Mr. Scullin doesn't know anything about exercise. His article is one big error. . . .

I don't think these guys really believe the junk they write; they do it for the purpose of bolstering the morale of men like themselves, who are victims of their own laziness. . . .

The truth of the matter is that many doctors, including mine, now recommend graded, systematic exercise.

If Scullin wants to eat, sleep and die in his easy chair, it's all right by me. But, when I go, the good Lord willing, I'll drop a barbell on my head, or a largemouth bass will pull me under and drown me.

Carl Snodgrass.

Dallas, Tex.

Look, Carl, read the thing again, will you? Old George didn't say you had to sit on your meat and do

nothing; he even gave you a long list of activities—bowling, fishing, swimming, golf, riding, sailing, shooting—which you can pursue all your life if you feel like it.

Where you've got Scullin mad at you, though, is saying he's writing about something he doesn't know anything about. He was, he says, writing about relaxation—and he insists he can out-relax any other ten loafers in the country. —Ed.

Correction

To the Editor:

In "Sports Aren't for Sissies" (May *Bluebook*), author Lionel White says that "The Electric Auto-Lite Company, Toledo, Ohio, is turning out the Crosley Super-Sports, a tiny four-cylinder . . ." etc.

For your information, Auto-Lite does not manufacture the Crosley Super-Sports. We make parts for various American cars, but produce no complete car of our own.

We would appreciate it if you would correct this impression for your readers.

D. B. Seem.

The Electric Auto-Lite Co., Toledo, O.

Done corrected, Mr. Seem, along with a sharp note to author White. —Ed.



"Fd offer you a cigarette, but it isn't safe to light one around here!"



Thinking Out Loud



Once again, as nearly as we can judge from letters to the editor, suggestions from writers, and casual conversations with loquacious strangers we've met in bars (into which we go to get out of the rain), it becomes apparent that not everybody in the world understands our editorial policy on this little publication. Aside, that is, from trying to sell as many magazines as our handsome hand-press can turn out.

Accordingly, here we go again, fellows:

We are, first and foremost, a magazine of adventurous escape for males. And we will print any story, fact or fiction, which we think will appeal to guys who are filled up to here with the multiple problems of trying to stay alive and to keep their families alive.

We do not, for example, think our readers have to be reminded constantly that this is a hell of a life at best, and that, no matter how you live it, you're still going to wind up some day extremely dead. Our readers know that, and we don't feel they need some fast-talking editor or writer to keep telling them so.

Which is why—although we've slipped occasionally—we try to avoid such stories as "The H-Bomb Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out," "Are Hangnails Contagious?" and "Beware of the Kellaloo Bird." Such essays, we feel, do nothing but harass a reader who already is harassed enough. From morning till night, on the radio, on television, in newspapers and magazines, and in talks with the mailman, the average guy sees and hears nothing but woe and misery. On top of that, the boss bawls him out, his wife wonders why the poor chump doesn't get a raise, his kids come down with the mumps or throw rocks through Dr. Sweeney's front window, and Aunt Sarah decides she guesses she'll spend the rest of her life in the guest bedroom. This is living?

So what we try to do around here is give a man a break. We try to give him a magazine he can take up in the attic or down in the furnace-room, and which he can read in peace and happiness while he smokes his pipe, pulls on a jug or spits at a hole in the wall. And if he sees something he doesn't like and feels like writing and telling us about it, so much the better. He's paid his two bits admission.

Which somehow or other brings to mind a couple of notes we've pulled in from a subscriber in Ohio.

This bird wound up in his first note, and, in a jim-dandy, neon-lighted, free-wheeling fury, took us apart but good. We were, he said, all the bad words he'd

communiqué that he wanted to take it all back. He'd written just to needle us anyhow, didn't mean a word he said, and here was his money again. "Put me back on the list," he requested.

All of which gives us an idea: nobody listens to anybody any more. Everybody's so busy telling everybody else off, and getting told off in return, that some bright soul's going to make a fortune one of these days as a listener. You'll pay the man a buck, and in return he'll let you give him hell for five minutes without interrupting.

So what you do, see, is take out a subscription to *Bluebook*. Then, any time you feel like telling someone what a mess Congress is making of the Tidelands thing, or what a bunch of crooks there are in City Hall, or how stupid magazine editors have become, you sit down and tell us. When you've written out all the wrath that's in you, bundle the damn thing up, enclose a dollar for handling charges, and mail it off to us. For a dollar, we'll guarantee to read it twice and send you a nice answer, written single-spaced and on one side of the paper.

You know of any better offers?

Do you know also of a situation which another reader has just brought to our attention? This one concerns safety on the highways.

...AND YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM



"Blonde coming up on your left . . . about five-two . . . greenish-blue suit . . . waist about 26 . . . hips 34—"

According to this chap, the automobile manufacturers—who recently launched a monster contest, with large prizes for folks who could come up with the best plan to insure highway safety—actually, are a good jump and a half ahead of their own contest. As our man put it, the very cars being manufactured today by the auto industry are doing more to insure highway safety than any set of rules you could draw up. According to our boy, it works like this:

Detroit came up with a gizmo called the "hard-top convertible," which is a convertible that isn't a convertible (or as the late Colonel Stoopnagle might have said it, a convertible for people who wanted a sedan in the first place). The way this works, though, as we understand it, a driver's tooling along the highway at a comfortable 85 or 90 mph, when he sees in his rear-view mirror an approaching vehicle with what looks like a white top. Mmmm, the guy says; cop. And he slyly drops her down to the speed limit. It's a good five miles farther along before the speeder wakes up to the fact that his pursuer isn't a cop, after all (and after him), but one of these two-toned hard-top convertibles.

Anyway, our informant holds, there now are so many two-toned jobs on the road that you can't tell a cop these days till the law puts his head in your window and gives you the old snarl. And the result is that traffic has slowed to a crawl all over the country, fewer and fewer folks are being killed, insurance rates should be dropping like apples off a tree, and who was the bright bucko who thought of all this in the first place?

A truly amazing world.

* * *

Truly amazing also are just a few of the confections being served up further along in this fascinating issue. For one thing, there's the interview with Mr. Ernest Hemingway, first prophet of the writing fraternity and the gentleman in whose name publishers light votive candles every hour on the hour. As you can imagine, if you are acquainted with Mr. Hemingway, some of his remarks had to be toned down somewhat in order to slide this issue past the post office. But it still is one of the better stories, and it's all there for readers gifted with an ability to peer between the lines.

There is, too, our book-lengther this month, our first attempt at a man-sized non-fiction effort which, nevertheless, has enough gutsy adventure on every page to satisfy even the most critical. Drop us a line if you don't agree.

Finally, take a squint at our fiction line-up. As you can see, there's enough there for a full evening in any man's attic or furnace-room, and we will thank you not to give us any argument on the subject. What do you want for twenty-five cents—"Gone with the Wind"?

MAXWELL HAMILTON

What Next!

NEIGH . . . In Swift Current, Sask., the social committee of the Horse Co-operative Marketing Association, canners of horsemeat, had to call off a sleighing party. It couldn't find any horses to pull the sleigh.

MUSCLES AND BUSTLES . . . In Santa Monica, Calif., body-builder Vic Tanny, six-foot, 230-pound owner of a string of muscle-building gymnasiums, was divorced by his 120-pound wife on the grounds she did all the weight-lifting in their family, and had to carry out the garbage and mow the lawn.

POR FAVOR . . . In Rio de Janeiro, the federal price-and-supply commission recently fired the 400 volunteers it had carefully selected to check on merchants' prices because many had made the rounds of merchants, collecting in advance for favorable reports.

PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR . . . In Milwaukee, after winning first prize in a liars' contest, J. Arthur Butler suddenly noticed how late it was and asked: "What will I tell my wife?"

FREE LOAD . . . In Minneapolis, after being arrested the 94th time for drunkenness, a man was released by the judge, who ruled he was "making progress."

ALL WET . . . In Santiago, Chile, the weather forecaster was sued by the mayor of Valdivia, who claimed that the forecaster's predictions of rain during Valdivia's centenary celebrations had cost the city 10,000,000 pesos, by discouraging visitors.

DOUBLE TROUBLE . . . In Knoxville, Tenn., Mrs. Horace Monday was knocked down by a reckless driver, got up, was immediately knocked down again by the same driver, presumably returning to learn if he had hurt her the first time.

LEARNER . . . In Albuquerque, N. Mex., the proprietor of the Type-writer Service Co. learned that the check with which he had been paid for a check-writing machine was a forgery.

VETERAN . . . In Palmetto, Fla., Samuel Semple, rejected by the Army in the Spanish-American War as underweight and in World War I as overage, was ordered by a draft board to report for induction as a draft delinquent.

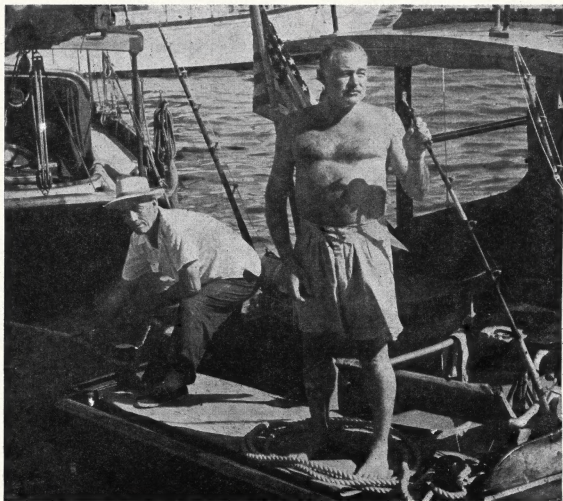
SPEEDY SERVICE . . . In Toronto, an optometrist posted this sign in his window: "Eyes Examined while You Wait."

AT HOME . . . In Wareham, Mass., a man was sentenced to two months in jail for vagrancy after cops learned he had already slept in the city jail for four nights without permission.

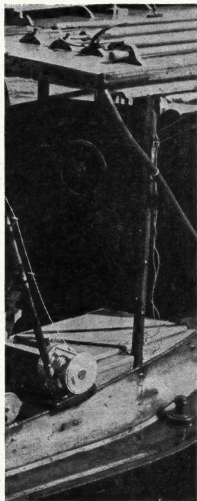
ONE SOLUTION . . . In Benton, Ill., a man lit some rags to make a smudge that would drive the bees out of his eaves, burned his house to the ground.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED . . . In Camp Strong, Japan, after being forwarded a folder offering him a medal if he would recruit a few men for the State Militia unit in Oklahoma, Sgt. Gene Evans replied he had signed up his whole company and was awaiting transfer orders.

AND FIREMEN? . . . In Concord, Mass., residents passed a law imposing a \$20 fine on all Peeping Toms except policemen on active duty.



Ernest Hemingway -



■ The old maestro sat at the end of the bar in the Café Floridita, with an eight-ounce frozen daiquiri in his hand. I sat near him and started the conversation. Three hours later he had put away seven more of the outsized daiquiris, and when he left he carried one away with him. By that time we had talked about Mickey Spillane, bullfighting, drinking, writing, and hunting.

It was the typical Cuban way of spending the midday, when the tropical sun is blazing outside, and within the saloons it's cool. And the Café Floridita is where Hemingway always hangs out when he's in Havana. He always sits on the same bar stool, too, and drinks the same drink—tall frozen daiquiris in large amounts, made by Pedrito, the Spanish expert on this drink.

The old man of the sea looked pretty rugged—tall, over six feet, around 220 pounds of fighting muscle. He doesn't shave often because of a skin ailment, and his white, stubbled beard gives him the look of an ancient mariner. But those merry brown eyes and that broad grin remind you that the ageing Hemingway is still all man—and more man than anyone else in his class.

Naturally I wanted to know his opinion of Spillane. So I asked him about it, point-blank: "What do you think of America's latest literary sensation, Mickey Spillane?"

"Why ask *me*?" His deep, rumbling voice was friendly but challenging.

"Because you're the man who started this school of writing—tough writing about hard guys."

This struck Hemingway as funny. He laughed loudly and slapped the bar. Then he said, "And you think Spillane writes that way? Well, you're wrong. Spillane doesn't even understand his own subject. He thinks he's writing about crime. He isn't. I'll give you facts. Remember my story 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber?' Francis' wife hates him because he's a coward. But when he gets his guts back, she fears him so much she has to kill him—shoots him in the back of the head. *That's* crime. If she had shot him when he was a coward, that's one thing. But shooting a brave man because he is brave—that's crime. The Spillane type

-MUY HOMBRE!

Whether you like him or not, you have to admit that

"Papa" Hemingway is a terrific hunk of man. And a

terrific hunk of writer. Witness his recent Pulitzer Prize.

■ By JACKSON BURKE

wouldn't understand this if they broke their brains trying. So don't tell me they belong in my school. They belong with the comic books."

"When I came into the bar I noticed you were reading a comic book yourself."

"Sure. But I don't call it literature. Spillane started out as a comic-book writer, and he's still one, to my way of thinking. He even admits it himself. People who read him, don't read me. They couldn't."

"He's very popular."

"Naturally. There are lots of scared little bank clerks and office boys. They read stuff like 'I, the Jury.' But they couldn't read 'The Old Man and the Sea.' I don't break a man's arm just to hear the bones crack or shoot a woman in the belly when there are lots of better things to do with her. Spillane's violence is for its own sake and means nothing. But if you find violence in good literature, it's only because violence is a natural condition of human life—except for bank clerks and office boys. Don't talk to me about Spillane."

He called the bartender. "Hola, Pedrito! Set 'em up in the other alley!"

"We started on a couple more of frozen daiquiris. The drink was invented at the Florida, and they still make the best ones in Cuba—or anywhere else, for that matter. Pedrito keeps plenty of bitter green olives and cold fried fish in front of you, so there's not so much danger of falling on your face from an overload of daiquiris. It's important to eat when you drink. Hemingway consumed a lot of these hors d'oeuvres with his drinks. He's a big man, and he needs a lot."

As we talked, various persons known to Hemingway would come through from time to time and greet him. He always had a smile and shake of the hand ready for his friends. When they saw he was there, they brightened up as if they had seen a long-lost friend. His popularity was amazing. And he was popular with everyone.

PEDRITO, Hemingway's special bartender, kept one eye on the old maestro's glass as he worked. And usually there was a fresh drink ready before Hemingway had to ask for it.

Hemingway is easy to find in Havana. Just ask anyone and you'll get an answer like this: "Hemingway? The American writer? When he comes to town he always goes to the Café Florida. You will find him there around eleven o'clock in the morning." That's how I found him.

There are many ways to interview a famous person. Sometimes it's in his office or in his home. Usually it is

not in a bar. And in only one case is it in such a bar as the Florida. As Hemingway remarked during the course of our long talk, "I like to come here and meet my friends. The frozen daiquiri oils the wheels of social progress."

I was glad he had said what he did about the Spillane school of writing, that weird phenomenon in American publishing. Practically everyone in the trade agrees that the new school hasn't taken a single reader away from writers like Hemingway, and it was good to hear Hemingway express himself on this matter.

But there was something else I wanted to ask him. I didn't quite know how to go about it. A few months ago, *Life* published a so-called exposé on Spanish bullfighting. According to *Life*, an old matador named Bienvenida complained that bullfighting in Spain had gone to hell because everywhere the bulls' horns were being sawed off, thus taking the risk and danger out of the sport. *Life* showed a set of photographs as proof.

We were having another daiquiri and rolling the poker dice when I figured I'd better just up and ask. He was in thick with *Life*, true enough, and had got several dollars from them for "The Old Man and the Sea," and maybe he wouldn't want to bite the hand that fed him. But I figured the old maestro would come out with the truth regardless.

"How about that *Life* magazine exposé?" I asked. "What do you think?"

"Come again?"

"As the man who introduced bullfighting to American readers with 'Death in the Afternoon,' what do you think of *Life*'s story?"

"It's all true, of course. What did you expect me to say?" Those sharp brown eyes peered at me quizzically from beneath the shaggy brows.

"Did Manolete get gored by a sawed-off horn?"

"Now, step down. I didn't say it was the whole truth. I just said it was all true—which it is. Do you know anything about bullfighting?"

"A little. I gave it a whirl down in Mexico last year."

"Good. Did you get next to any bulls?"

"A couple."

"And did they have sawed-off horns?"

"Not hardly. I've got a scar on my forehead from a horn that had a damned sharp point."

Hemingway peered at the small scar just under the hairline. He said, "Good. Now, did you ever see bulls with sawed-off horns in the arenas?"

"Twice. Pat McCormick's first fight at Juárez, and one Sunday when Juanita Aparicio appeared at Guadalupe."

"Lady bullfighters, both of them. Well, the McCormick girl no longer fights sawed-off horns. She's really in there now. That goring she got at Aguascalientes proves it. Now, sometimes you'll see men fighting blunted horns. But these are sawed-off men, if you get me."

A Cuban woman, no longer in the first bloom of youth but still retaining some of her former beauty, came into the Florida. Hemingway stood up and spoke to her in Spanish. They conversed for a short while, then she left.

Looking after her, he grinned and said to me, "I've stood up for that woman many years now, and I'll still stand up for her. Now what were we saying about bullfighting?"

"We'd just about agreed that sawed-off horns do sometimes happen, but no good *torero* ever does it. What about Bienvenida? Did you know him in Spain?"

"Bienvenida? Sure. Toward the end of 1936, he and some other bullfighters joined up with Franco's forces. Bienvenida and Maravilla followed Marcial Lalande into battle."

"On the side of Franco?"

"That's right."

"Fascists, eh?" I commented.

HEMINGWAY took a deep pull at his daiquiri and said in a deep growl, "Now, look here. I don't know whether you were in Spain at that time, but I was, and I know that you can't say fascist and anti-fascist the way you say black and white. Sure, Franco was a fascist. But the government he was fighting against was controlled by Communists."

"Let me tell you something not everybody knows. During the night of October 18, 1936, 1,000 women from the aristocratic Salamanca quarter of Valencia were arrested by government troops and bundled into two mansions that had been commandeered for this purpose. Mind you, their men were not seized. And all night long, fathers and husbands and sons and brothers stood helplessly outside those two mansions, calling to their women. That's one thing."

"But there's something else. No one knows how many thousands of priests and nuns were murdered by the so-called Loyalist government. Franco was a fascist. Well, Spain needed a strong man to protect the women, the homes and families, the Church. Now I'll tell you something else. Marcial Lalande, at that time, was one of the greatest of Spain's matadors. He was also President of the Spanish Socialist Bullfighters' Union. The Communist government wrecked his union. Marcial Lalande, *matador de toros*, took up arms as a captain of artillery, fighting the men

who had done these things. With him went Bienvenida and Maravilla. Soon the great Belmonte himself joined Franco.

"And there were other *toreros*, too, who joined Franco not because they were fascists (for many were socialists) but because they knew the greater enemy was their own government, run by a Communist clique.

"And along with these bullfighters went such famous ones as Chicuelo, Torerito, Sanchez Mejía, Curro Carro, Gitanillo.

"Bienvenida, who was *Life's* informant on the sawing of the horns, told a true story. But *Life* itself didn't tell the whole story. And part of it is that Bienvenida himself was always too fine a man of honor ever to fight blunted horns."

Cuba is, of course, run by a dictatorship, too. I asked Hemingway what he thought of Batista, the strong man of Cuba.

He frowned and said, "I don't mix into politics. I like the Cubans, and they don't like Batista. Maybe they'll do something about him. But I'm a foreigner here, you know. I can't go butting in. Well, I did give some rights to 'The Old Man and the Sea' to *Bohemia* magazine." (This is an anti-Batista review.) "No, I just live my own life and mind my own business. I'm a beat-up old bird. I can't go joining revolutions when I have other books to write. That's for younger men. There shall be wars and rumors of wars. Might as well enjoy it. Go find yourself a revolution, young fellow. Try Cuba, maybe."

"What are you writing now?"
"Can't tell you. I don't want to talk it all away. And I don't want any publicity about it. When I write, I try to avoid publicity. A man needs a private life to write, and sometimes he has to seem a bit rude to keep his private life. Now I have to work like hell to write a better book than my last one, which I had a lot of luck with, and I am laying off all publicity until I have done something that's worth talking about. And until then all I can do is to hope I'll be able to keep my mouth shut as tight as possible."

I ASKED him for just a hint of what his new book will be about, but he wouldn't crack. It's a safe guess, though, that it will be about one of the sports of death, or maybe about the tragic things that happen to those engaged in the sports of love. He probably will not write a war book. I asked him if he had thought of doing a bullfight novel, since several already have been successful and the men's magazines all have run bullfight articles.

"Maybe some day; not now. I liked Tom Lea's book all right, but these magazine articles on bullfighting are the most ignorant damn' things I ever read."

"I had one in last month's *Blue-book*."

"Well, I hope it was better than the others. You say you studied bullfighting in Mexico? Did you write about how the young men have to buy their own bulls?"

"Yes, all that."

"You probably wrote it all right, then. Ever go hunting?"

"No. I never did. Are you planning a trip?"

"I'd like to finish this new book first and then go to Africa again. If you don't hunt every so often you get fat—in the head and fat in the heart. Hunting keeps your brains where they belong and your heart in the right place."

"And there's something about Africa. I don't know what it is, but when you go there you feel it. It's big and exciting. Make some money, young man, and go hunting in Africa."

"Ever hear of Alex Montani?"

"No. Who's he?"

"A South American bullfighter who went hunting in Africa armed with nothing but his fighting cape."

"You know him?" he asked.

"I've talked with him," I said.

"What animals did he find with the cape?"

"I can't remember all of them, but I've got the notes written down somewhere. The buffalo was one of them—and the rhinoceros, too. He'd pass the animal with the cape a few times and then his hunter would shoot the beast."

Hemingway frowned and said, "I wonder what he was trying to do. Did he say?"

"Sure. He just wondered whether some of this African big game would run like the fighting bull—straight for the cape, not at the man. Of course, he'd never know until it was over. By then, it would have been too late. But luck was with him."

Hemingway pondered this awhile. Then he said, "I'll stick to guns."

I offered him a good Cuban cigar, but he refused, saying, "I don't smoke any more. Used to, though; but it makes you feel bad in the morning, so I quit it. Liquor is another matter. Only thing wrong with rum is the cost. I'll sign the tab here for about \$15. Every nine months I go broke."

"But you made a lot on 'The Old Man and the Sea,' didn't you?"

"What's a lot, young man?"

"*Life* said \$30,000."

"I know. And someone else guessed \$50,000 and another one \$65,000. What I got was \$40,000. Ever figure

out the tax on that? Besides, I have heavy expenses. My wife doesn't spend anything; she's a fine girl, and she saves dough for me. But I have a house, a car, a boat, servants, cats, dogs, pigeons, cows—out there at Finca Vigia. You ought to see that place."

"I'd like to, but I go back to the States tomorrow morning early."

"Well, I'm busy on this new book until June, anyway."

"Working on it every day?"

"Can't work days. I write at night. Bad for the eyes, but that can't be helped."

"How are your eyes now?" I noticed he wore steel-rimmed spectacles when reading.

"Not bad. I've got one bad eye and one good one. Some son-of-a-bitch poked his finger in my eye one time, and I can't see out of it ever since. But the other one is fine."

"You've had a lot of trouble that way, haven't you?"

"Some. Seven concussions, six broken ribs. . . ." He ordered another round of daiquiris. "Well, we can't worry about a few little accidents. They're bound to happen if we don't hide in bed. Matter of fact, some of the worst accidents of all can happen to you right in your own bed."

He chuckled quietly over that one.

HEMINGWAY'S white hair might deceive the casual onlooker, but actually he still is in fine shape.

I wondered how he managed to keep fit. So I asked him about boxing, knowing he always liked to work out. Some say he could fell a horse with his fist.

"I don't do much any more," he said. "Game fishing and fooling around the farm keep me in shape. I still like to see a good prizefight, though."

"Do you know Kid Gavilan?" I asked.

"Sure thing. The greatest little welterweight in the world. Know him?"

"I've talked with him out at his farm."

"Ever notice his hands?" Hemingway asked.

"What do you mean?"

"His hands. They're murderous in the ring, but when he touches the faces of his children, or his pretty wife, those powerful hands open like delicate flowers and you see long slender artistic fingers. The guy is as gentle as a lamb. A clean fighter, too."

"You must be pretty happy in Cuba," I remarked. "Here you have a highly sporting country—baseball, boxing, horse-racing, fishing—"

"Well, considering the size of this little island," he answered, "I guess we have as good baseball as in the

States. And you're right about the Cubans: they're a very sporting people. Like the Spanish and the Mexicans. You know Spain?"

"Never been there," I replied. "But I hear it's wonderful."

"Yes, the bullfights, the wonderful wines, the spirit of the people. It's one of the poorest countries in Europe, but the people still have that terrific spirit of *alegría*. I don't know what that word is in English, but it means a deep-going happiness that nothing can kill."

He had said that game fishing helped him to keep in shape, and I wondered about "The Old Man and the Sea"—whether Hemingway himself had ever caught a marlin like the one in the book. In the novel, an old Cuban fisherman hooks an 18-foot, 1500-pound blue marlin which drags him on a wild two-day ride. This fish breaks records. The world's record for black marlin (the Pacific counterpart of the blue marlin found in the Caribbean) is a 1095-pound fish caught on August 23, 1952, by Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., of Houston, Texas, at Cabo Blanco, Peru. This is the largest fish which has ever been taken by rod and reel.

"Well," Hemingway said, "that's hard to answer. Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't. We've got bigger ones in these Caribbean waters. The commercial fishermen along the waterfront of Havana often bring in blues weighing 1500 pounds or more. Personally, I've hooked some damn big ones, but I never brought in a fish that big. There's a long time between hooking one of those giants and bringing him in. Lots of them get away. But I guess I've fought the big ones." He handed me another daiquiri and asked, "Do you fish?"

"Not lately. Used to fish a little around Catalina—yellowtail, albacore, tuna, barracuda."

"Tuna and barracuda with light tackle can be fun," Hemingway said. "But hunting's the thing. I'm impatient to get back to Africa—maybe this summer after I finish the new book, if I can get it done that fast. My wife keeps after me to work harder on it. From Africa I want to go up to Venice and shoot ducks. My wife is good with the shotgun, too. Once a party of six of us downed 331 ducks in one afternoon near Venice. And then, maybe we'll get up to Paris again." His eyes took on a dreamy look. "I like to go back to Paris," he said. "We were all young there and worked hard and played harder. I got started there."

A party of American tourists came into the bar then, and I observed that the women looked cold, compared with the Cuban girls.

Hemingway had a good laugh over that and said, "So you know the difference, eh? Walk down the street and look into the black eyes of these Cuban girls and you'll see hot sunlight in them—fiery and wild, but friendly, too. No doubt you've noticed the difference in the way they walk. Our girls come down here on a trip, and they're still wearing girdles, so they walk stiffly and coldly. But these Cubans! . . . A girdle manufacturer would die of starvation down here. Yeah, you can always tell a Cuban girl by the way she walks—free and easy and unashamed. But of course, I'm a married man. I live down here because of the climate and the fishing. And because I like Spanish people."

Hemingway spoke in Spanish from time to time, mixing up the two languages. His Spanish was very good.

I asked him if he would compete in the big Cuban shoot that was scheduled for the near future. Antonio Solar, of the Cuban government, had purchased around 4,000 live pigeons from the States for the big shoot. But Hemingway said that, no, what with a flock of pigeons of his own, and the need to work hard on the new book, he just didn't think he'd be able to enter the competition. Besides, with Africa maybe coming up very soon, he would wait.

So with plenty of tall frozen daiquiris and smooth Cuban cigars (the latter for me only) and talk about this and that, we spent a very pleasant three hours. In fact, after a few of those oversized daiquiris the Florida bar seemed just about the finest saloon in the Western hemisphere. Which it may be. They also serve a filet mignon that can't be beaten even at Antoine's, and a lobster with mayonnaise that will make small men grow strong. Hemingway is right in picking the Florida as his headquarters. But the prices are a trifle high. I saw one customer sign a three-months' bar bill for \$1,500.

I asked Hemingway about his standing with the literary critics, because he doesn't draw a very good press. His answer was typical.

"Well, now, would you worry a damn about the critics when your books sell? I'll really start worrying when those pantywaists write good reviews about my work."

There's a rumor that he has on occasion taken a poke or two at some of the literary reviewers. He didn't say no.

The thing that makes him not too popular with the critics, but very popular with the general reader, may be that Hemingway strikes the interviewer as a decent man—a man of decent feeling, as Evelyn Waugh (wasn't it?) once pointed out. Also, Ernest Hemingway frequently makes fools of

the critics, showing up their confusion, as in "For Whom the Bell Tolls"; their cowardice, as in "The Sun Also Rises"; ridiculing their prissiness, as in "Across the River and into the Trees." I suggested these reasons to him, and again he didn't say no.

Nor would he say yes. Hemingway is a modest man, contrary to popular belief. Not backward, but modest. For example, he does not boast; he just tells the facts.

It's hard for him to explain himself except in the simplest terms. I asked him if he could put into words his theory of the novel.

He said, "Hell, no. I don't make theories. I write books. My books are about people doing real things. I write about lovers and cowards and brave men and fools, showing acts of love, cowardice, bravery, foolishness."

"Like Robert Browning?" I asked.

"He's one of the greatest poets in the English language. I wouldn't say I write like him, but he did write about the same things I do."

"Who would you say is the best younger novelist in America right now?"

"There may be several good ones. There's one I like very much. Have you read Nelson Algren?"

"The Man with a Golden Arm?"

"Damn fine novel! That boy Algren has really got it."

"Do you think he has learned from Hemingway?"

"That's hard to say. Maybe he learned most of all from himself. One writer can be influenced by another, of course, but if he's any damn good at all he learns mostly from himself, and his material."

It was time to go. He had to leave before two o'clock. As he left, he carried another big frozen daiquiri with him, to keep him cool during the hot ride from Havana to his farm. A chauffeur was waiting for him outside in a Buick station wagon.

I was waiting for a parting word, hoping he would sum things up somehow.

He did.

"As one writer to another," he said slowly, and very quietly, with absolute conviction, "I can tell you something: Know your work. And do it. And live with your material."

When the station wagon had pulled out of sight, I looked around me at the hot streets of Havana and the good-natured Cuban people. These were the common people, the real ones, the ones to write about. Hemingway was to be written about, too, in a different way. For he was real. He was the truth. The old master of us all knew some pretty smart answers. ●



the MAN with the GOLDEN HAND

There are good gifts
and bad gifts, as anyone
knows who has tried to
select a gift for a woman.
But it doesn't matter
which kind you buy.
She won't like it.

BY ROBERT ARTHUR

THIS STORY IS GOING TO ANSWER a question you've probably asked yourself a hundred times. And you'll see, when you've finished, that it's just about the only possible answer, even though some of the things I'm going to tell you may sound a little surprising at first.

The fellow I'm going to tell you about is Horace Milton, who was thirty-three when all this happened: a nice, quiet chap who minded his own business and had been married for eight years to a very pretty wife named Martha, whom he loved very much. Horace was a bookkeeper, and his boss, Mr. Springer, was a tough egg who often kept him working late.

This particular night Mr. Springer had kept him even later than usual, and it was Martha's birthday, which is how Horace happened to step into Ye Olde Gift Shoppe to buy her a present. Horace had never noticed Ye Olde Gift Shoppe before, but this particular night he was walking home from the office by a different route and there it was, with a vacant lot on one side and a warehouse on the other.

The place was dark, except for a faint yellow light that gleamed through the dusty window, just bright enough to show up the words painted on the glass, Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe, that had made him stop in the first place. It certainly wasn't much of a place, even for a "giftte shoppe." But here he was, almost home, with Martha expecting a nice birthday present and every other store in the neighborhood shut tight, so—well, Horace stepped through the doorway.

As soon as he was inside, though, he concluded he'd made a mistake. Inside the place looked even less like a giftte shoppe and more like a junkie shoppe.

In one corner was what looked like an egg the size of a bushel basket, and hanging from the ceiling above it was a pair of old slippers with little wings at the heels. Horace could have sworn he saw the wings beat a couple of times, but of course it was just a trick of the shadows made by the old oil lamp hanging from the ceiling.

There was more, but he couldn't quite make out what the rest of the stock consisted of, for it was covered with a fine assortment of cobwebs. He'd seen enough, though, to make him decide to take his trade elsewhere, when he heard the clearing of a throat behind him.

Horace spun around. There beside a long dusty counter stood the proprietor, looking at Horace. He couldn't have been more than four feet tall—his eyes were on a level with Horace's middle coat button. Very curious eyes they were, too—large and round and glowing yellow, like a jack-o'-lantern's, and set in a pointed face made to seem even smaller by two ears uncommonly long and sharp.

"Good evening, Mr. Milton," the fellow said, very pleasantly. The yellow jack-o'-lantern eyes blinked once, and the pointed tip of one ear twitched. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Uh," Horace mumbled, "I was just looking for a gift for my wife. But I don't see anything suitable." And he started backing toward the door.

He didn't make it, though. One long thin arm shot out—seeming to stretch as if made of rubber—caught him by the coat and pulled him back.

"Now, sir!" The strange proprietor cocked his head at Horace, the large yellow eyes glowing. "A gift for your wife? Exactly! Is she the nagging kind? Is she extravagant, talkative, greedy? Or have you just grown tired of her for no reason, which often happens?"

"Why—why, no," Horace stammered. "It's nothing like that at all."

"No matter," the little fellow said, rubbing his hands with a dry, whisk-

ing sound. "Your reasons are your own. Whatever you want, we have it. Antimony, spirits of hemlock, silken nooses, henbane—which do you prefer? If you'll let me make a suggestion, I advise you to take my own special Spirit-away Powder—just dust it lightly over a sleeping wife and experience no further annoyance."

"Why, I don't want any of those things!" Horace said indignantly. "I love my wife. She does worry too much about making me wear rubbers in wet weather, and she cries if I forget her birthday or our anniversary, but outside of that I haven't any complaint."

"Extraordinary!" The yellow eyes blinked twice. "Can't recall when a husband has said such a thing to me in centuries. I must think."

This he did, resting a sharp chin in one hand and closing his eyes for several seconds. Then he beamed at Horace.

"To be sure," he said. "You want to give your wife something as an evidence of your affection. A natural mistake on my part. I usually sell such gifts only to brides. So now: What kind of gift did you have in mind?"

"Why, just a gift," Horace said. "Something to show her I love her, and to keep her satisfied so I can get the work done I'm taking home to-night. I was thinking of a silver cream pitcher."

"A silver cream pitcher! My dear sir, I don't deal in such articles! You said you wanted a gift, didn't you? Well, that's what I sell here—gifts. Now come, come, give me some notion what gift your wife would like. What does she seem to desire most in life, or feel the absence of most keenly? By the way, call me Clarence. That's my name."

"Why—er—Mr. Clarence," Horace Milton mumbled, considerably bewildered by now, "what she wants most, I guess, is for me to make more money. I'm not very good at asking for raises, and Mr. Springer is a very hard man to talk to, so—"

"The gift of making money!" Clarence rubbed his hands together. "Now we're progressing. That would be a gift she'd appreciate, eh? If you had the gift of making money?"

"Why, yes," Horace agreed. "But that would be a gift I'd have to have and— Wait a minute, I'm getting all confused. We started out talking about one kind of gift and now we're talking about another. A birthday gift and the gift of making money aren't the same thing at all."

"Tut, tut," Clarence said. "A gift is a gift. We deal only in one kind here—the genuine article. Of course

if you had the gift of making money, it would be a gift your wife would appreciate for her birthday."

"But—" By now Horace's head was spinning. "How could I explain to Martha that I had a gift for making money, which was a birthday gift for her, because— Oh, dear," he groaned. "I don't feel well. I have to go. Really I do. I'll come back some other time."

Clarence's hand darted out again and seized his lapel.

"Nonsense!" the little man said. "Have you ten dollars?"

"Yes," Horace gulped, "but—"

"Then it's a deal. Grasp my hand firmly." He thrust out a long thin hand, curiously cool and dry to the touch, and Horace took it. He couldn't help himself.

"Shillings, pounds and pence, dollars, dimes and cents," Clarence chanted, his eyes closed. "By this hand may you make 'em, even if you have to fake 'em. Abracadabra and so forth."

The yellow eyes opened.

"There," the little man said. "It's done. Spell enough for an easy gift like that one. Ten dollars, please."

In a daze Horace took out his wallet and handed over the money.

"Now," Clarence said, "you're entitled to our free gift offer, extra-special this year only—one gift free with every gift you buy. Hold out your hand again."

Horace tried to refuse, but Clarence grabbed it anyway.

"Juno, moon, love, dove, sigh, die," he chanted, eyes tight shut. "You're a poet, you will know it. Abracadabra, et cetera."

Opening his eyes, he beamed at Horace.

"There!" he said. "Now you have the gift of verse too. Only appropriate gift I could think of to match your name. Horace and Milton! Great fellows, both of them. Poets, too. Well, I'm certainly happy you came in. Haven't had a customer in I don't know how long, and I was almost ready to shut up shop and move somewhere else. Come in any time you want another gift. I have the finest stock in this hemisphere. The gift of gab, of music, of courage, of second sight, of optimism, of punctuality—all those and lots more. See you again, Mr. Milton."

He gave a quick, bobbing bow and a moment later Horace found himself out in the street once more, wondering confusedly how Clarence had known his name.

It was three blocks farther on before Horace was anything like himself again, and then only after stepping into Harry's Bar and Grill for a quick one—only beer, of course. He decided

Illustrated by HANK BERGER

against trying to get his ten dollars back—no telling what might happen if he tangled with Clarence and Ye Olde Gift Shoppe again. One thing was certain, though—he'd have to keep the whole affair secret from Martha. And he still had to find her a present, too.

Well, Horace didn't have any trouble with the present, as it turned out. There was a second-hand shop only a block from his apartment and he caught the proprietor just closing up. Horace bought a silver cream pitcher that the fellow had polished so you couldn't tell it had been used at all. They were both a bit startled when Horace said, "I want a present for my wife, a silver pitcher or a knife," but then they grinned and assumed Horace had accidentally made a rhyme.

HORACE began to wonder a little, though, when he got home and handed Martha the pitcher and said tenderly, "Just a present for my dear one, hope it doesn't seem a queer one. It's nothing fancy, it is true, but it shows that I love you."

Martha gaped at him, and Horace, flabbergasted, gaped back. But then Martha laughed happily and patted his cheek.

"What a silly you are, Horace!" she said. "Even making up a verse to go with it. It makes me very happy that you didn't forget what the day is. And I've cooked a special dinner for you—roast beef, mashed potatoes and peas, with ice cream for dessert."

"That sounds like a dandy dinner, though not the kind to make me thinner," Horace said with enthusiasm. "Mashed potatoes and roast beef please me 'most beyond belief; I will probably stuff and stuff, are you sure you have enough?"

Martha gave him a strange look.

"Horace," she demanded suspiciously, "are you drunk?"

"Of course I'm not drunk, dear," Horace denied. "I've only had a single beer."

"Well, you're certainly talking very strangely. I wish you'd stop it."

"Certainly, dear, if it'll please you," Horace mumbled, unfolding his paper and plumping himself down behind it in his easy chair. "I was only trying to tease you."

Then, rather than risk any more conversation, he devoted himself to the sports page. But his mind was not on American League standings.

His mind was back in Ye Olde Gift Shoppe. And a horrible suspicion was coming over him that Clarence, the proprietor—

But it wasn't possible! It simply wasn't!

"It isn't true!" Horace muttered to himself. "It isn't true. Such things can't be done to you!" Then, realiz-

ing he had spoken in verse again, he shut up. Maybe it wasn't true, but just the same—

Dinner was a strained affair. Martha kept glancing at him strangely, and Horace for his part confined his conversation to monosyllables. By the time dinner was over Martha was almost in tears. She pointedly put the silver cream pitcher out of sight, and when she had finished the dishes she went off to bed without even saying good night.

Unhappily, Horace got out the ledgers he'd brought home with him and tried to work on them. He uncapped the beautiful Swiss-made fountain pen Martha had given him for a wedding present, the one that wrote black, green, blue or red. Horace had never seen another one like it in this country and usually with it in his fingers his work was a pleasure. But not tonight. His mind kept wandering.

He found himself with Martha's scissors in his hand, aimlessly clipping a sheet of notepaper into rectangles. Sternly he focused his mind again on the ledgers—but his mind wouldn't stay there. He kept thinking of Ye Olde Gift Shoppe and Clarence and wondering if—

But the more he thought about the evening's strange happenings, the more bewildered he became. His thoughts kept chasing themselves around like mice playing tag. Then he came to himself with a start and realized he'd been sitting there not telling how long, woolgathering and doodling with his fountain pen all over one of the slips of paper he'd cut out. He might as well be in bed.

Breakfast the next morning did not start the day off on quite the right note, though Horace came to the table ready to apologize.

"Good morning, my dear; the day seems clear," he said. "Coffee smells swell, hope you slept well."

The beginnings of a smile fled from his wife's clear, youthful features. Her lips closed tightly and a single tear, squeezing from the corner of her eye, was her only answer.

Horace finished his toast and coffee, grabbed his hat and briefcase, and marched toward the door. Then he turned, as always, to kiss Martha good-bye.

"Horace," she said then, "do you think you should go to the office today? I mean—perhaps you're ill. Maybe you should go see Dr. Phelps. I thought you were just teasing me, but—"

"I am not the least bit ill; I have no need to take a pill," Horace said with dignity. "If I've caused you any pain, I'm sorry—but I can't explain. Now excuse me, but I'm late. Mr. Springer hates to wait."

Then, as the tears welled up in Martha's clear blue eyes again, he hastily closed the door. It was terrible, worrying her like this—but suppose he tried to tell her the truth? Then she'd be positive he was going off his chump, and she'd worry twice as much. . . .

Horace tried to forget his troubles by plunging into work as soon as he reached the office. But he'd hardly opened his ledgers when the phone rang. It was Martha.

"Horace!" she said tenderly over the telephone. "You darling! Oh, I'm so ashamed of being angry at you. But what a funny way to give me such a wonderful present."

"What did you say?" Horace asked, baffled. "Repeat it, pray."

"I said you're a darling, leaving it on the sideboard for me to find after you'd left, and making me realize how bad-tempered I'd been, and how good to me you really were. Now I can't talk any more—I'm hurrying right downtown."

SHE hung up and Horace, rubbing his forehead, put the phone down. He couldn't imagine what she was talking about, but he didn't have time to think about it now because there was work to be done on the books and Mr. Springer would want to see them as soon as he came in. So Horace plunged into his work. Luck was with him this time, the figures balanced easily, and Mr. Springer didn't show up until almost noon. By then Horace had the books finished and was sitting back, daydreaming and doodling with his fountain pen. He was thinking, suppose some day he did acquire the gift of making money and got rich, first thing he'd do would be to take Martha on a second honeymoon, a trip around the world, and then—

"Milton!"

Horace jumped. It was Mr. Springer himself, standing by his chair, looking down, his fishlike face very red.

"I've been calling you for the last five minutes!"

"Sorry, Mr. Springer, didn't mean to linger," Horace mumbled and gathered up the books. Mr. Springer stalked into his private office and Horace followed. Then for several minutes he just sat while Mr. Springer, grunting occasionally, leafed through the ledgers. Presently Mr. Springer stopped at an item.

"This three-thousand-dollar rebate for Willis and Company," he growled. "What was that for?"

"That one's easy to explain, it was just a damage claim," Horace said without thinking. "Freight car in a wreck, smashed our shipment all to heck. We paid Willis, railroad paid us; no one made a bit of fuss."

"What?" Mr. Springer's jaw had dropped. "Milton, what's wrong with you? Are you drunk?"

"No, sir," Horace gulped and closed his mouth before he could say anything that rhymed.

"You're talking very oddly!"

He continued with the ledgers, looking suspiciously at Horace from the corners of his eyes from time to time. At last he came to the final page.

"All right, Milton," he began; then his jaw dropped even lower than before. He was staring goggle-eyed at something on the final page. Nervously Horace peered over to see what it was.

It was a hundred-dollar bill, pasted to the bottom of the ledger sheet.

No, not pasted. Drawn there! Just one side of it, of course, the side with Benjamin Franklin's portrait on it. But it certainly looked real.

Mr. Springer's eyes popped. First he tried to pick up the hundred. Then he ran his fingers over it and found it really was drawn on the page.

"Milton, what does this mean?" he thundered.

Horace swallowed hard. He remembered now, doodling something while daydreaming about being rich—he must have drawn the bill then. But it was a perfect hundred-dollar bill, right down to the last fine pen-strokes—only he'd drawn it with a fountain pen on a page of a ledger!

"I don't know, I'm shore," Horace stammered. "It wasn't there before."

What Springer would have said to this he never knew. At that instant the office door burst open and Miss Perkins, the receptionist, stood there looking scared.

"Mr. Springer, there's two men here want to see Mr. Milton, and—"

But the men hadn't waited. They came right in, big men, solid men, with gimlet eyes and square jaws.

"Treasury Department," the first one said. "We want to talk to Horace Milton. His wife's just been picked up for passing a phony hundred-dollar bill and she says he gave it to her."

"Is that so?" Mr. Springer said. "There's your man. I always thought he had a criminal face. Now excuse me, while I call my auditors and order a complete check of his accounts."

So in practically no time Horace was in the pokie, his mind a whirl of dismay and bewilderment. Of course they didn't haul him right down and toss him heave-ho through the jail doors. First they took him to a big, gloomy building, and there was Martha, red-eyed and sobbing.

"Oh, Horace," she wailed, "why did you do it? I told you I wanted nice things but I didn't want them so badly you had to become a counterfeiter."

I was happy, really, I was!" And she began to sob again.

After that the gimlet-eyed, square-jawed men questioned him, first one, then another. But the more Horace tried to explain about Clarence and Ye Olde Gifft Shoppe, with every time his mouth opening those jingly verses coming out—well, you can imagine the result.

"We've got hold of a wack!" one of the men finally said wearily. "There's no such place as this Olde Gifft Shoppe in the directory, and our men can't find any such establishment in that neighborhood. This guy is going to be more of a headache than Old 880. Put him in a cell and give him twenty-four hours to think it over; then we'll question him again. Those awful rhymes are driving me crazy!"

They let Martha have one final word with him before they dragged him away.

"It's all my fault, Horace; you did it for me," she sobbed, clinging to him and taking the press out of his coat with her tears. "I don't care what you've done, I love you and I'll stand by you. I'll even go to Alcatraz with you, if I have to. My sister's husband's cousin is Mortimer Flugle the criminal lawyer, and I'm going to hire him for you right away."

This evidence of Martha's love and affection cheered Horace up for a little while, but when he found himself alone in a cold cell, his spirits began to droop again. He was in a bad spot, and he knew it.

Last night he'd been doodling with his fountain pen on a slip of paper—only he hadn't just been doodling. Unknown to him, his hand was drawing a perfect hundred-dollar bill.

Then later in the office he'd been daydreaming and doodling again, and this time his hand had drawn one side of a hundred-dollar bill on Mr. Springer's ledgers. All because of that silly charm Clarence had recited last night in Ye Olde Gifft Shoppe, "Shillings, pounds and pence, dollars, dimes and cents; by this hand may you make 'em, even if you have to fake 'em."

"Hey, Milton!" called the guard. "You got a visitor. Here's your mouth-piece. Ten minutes, Counselor."

The cell door opened and closed and Horace looked up at Mortimer Flugle, his wife's sister's husband's cousin. Mortimer Flugle was large and paunchy, with a chin that had been doubled and redoubled, and a pink face adorned by glasses on a black ribbon, and he didn't just exude benevolence, he broadcast it.

"Well, well, Milton," said Flugle. "Charged with counterfeiting, eh? Mighty good workmanship too, I hear. Suppose you tell me about it."

Horace shrugged dolefully.

"I bought a gift for making money; the gift would really be a honey if the money wasn't funny," he sighed. "I mean phony. I mean—"

He stopped. Flugle was staring at him oddly.

"You're upset," the lawyer said soothingly. "Suppose you start over and try again."

Horace took a deep breath.

"I tried to buy my wife a present, something she'd consider pleasant. I didn't want her to be vexed, so I wound up getting hexed. A gift this Clarence fellow sold me, but the thing he never told me was I'd be a counterfeiter—"

He stopped again, for Mortimer Flugle had backed away.

"It's all right, Milton, perfectly all right," Flugle said hastily. "Naturally you're upset. I'll tell you what. Now as I understand it you claim you drew that phony century note with your fountain pen. Suppose you just demonstrate for me, so I'll know how strong their case is. I've brought you some paper cut to the right size and—"

At Horace's look he stopped.

"Yes, yes, of course," Flugle burred, backed right up against the cell door. "Then let's do it this way: You write down all the facts instead, while I go chat with the boys. I'll be back in half an hour or so and we'll map our strategy."

He pressed some paper into Horace's hand, called the guard, and left hurriedly. Horace didn't blame him. He took out his fountain pen. But what was the use of writing anything? Who would believe the truth? And what else could he tell them? All he could do was plead guilty and go off to Atlanta or Leavenworth—or maybe Alcatraz. And perhaps while he was in prison the hex would wear off.

HORACE had already served half his sentence, in his mind, when the cell door reopened and Flugle came in again.

"Well, well, got it all written out?" Flugle asked, taking the oblong pad from Horace. "Now let's just see—"

He stopped with a strangled noise that sounded like "Awk!" He held up the pad and stared at it. Then he lowered it and stared at Horace.

"So it's true!" he breathed. "You said you had a gift—my boy—but it's more than a gift, it's sheer genius."

"What?" Horace asked. "What are you talking about, Flugle? Or are you just blowing, like a bugle?"

Flugle ignored the insult.

"This, my boy," he said. "I'm talking about this." He held up the pad, and Horace turned slightly green. While he was daydreaming he had turned one of those precat slips of paper into another hundred-dollar bill!

He snatched for it, but Flugle put the pad in his pocket.

"Now, Milton, calm yourself," he crooned. "I'm not going to mention this to anybody. Instead I'm going right up and bail you out myself, even if the bail is twenty-five thousand. We must have a conference about this gift of yours, Milton; we really must!"

THAT is how it happened that an hour later Horace Milton was driving across town with Flugle himself at the wheel, with a gleam in his eye that Horace didn't like.

"Now, Milton," Flugle said, "I'm not going to ask you how you do it. How, with an ordinary fountain pen, you can whip up a bill that could fool the treasury men, is your secret. But you have a talent—no, a genius, and it must be properly harnessed.

"The thing that tripped you up was the paper. Now it just happens that I also have another client who has had a little trouble with the T-men. But in his case it wasn't the paper, it was the engraving that stopped him.

"So it occurred to me, why shouldn't I introduce you to each other? He has a fine stock of paper and you—well, you have the ability to make that paper worth something. What you and he do in a business way after I've introduced you is no concern of mine. But I predict you'll both do extraordinarily well, and I hope you won't forget it was Mortimer Flugle who brought you together.

"As for the present little trouble of yours, I've already got three different lines of defense mapped out, and there's always insanity to fall back on. If we need that, all we have to do is put you on the stand and let you start your story about that little fellow you call Clarence, and it's in the bag."

He put a large, soft hand reassuringly on Horace's arm, but the truth is Horace wasn't listening. For they were driving down a dingy, badly lit street near his apartment and all of a sudden he saw a shop that looked familiar. As they came abreast of it he saw he was right—there were the words on the window, Ye Olde Gifte Shoppe, and a single light inside, just barely visible.

"Flugle!" Milton shouted. "There's the shop, so come to a stop! Step on the brake, you legal fakes!"

"What?" Flustered by Horace's outburst, Flugle brought the car to a stop. "What's the matter, Milton?"

But Horace did not pause to bandy words with him—or verses. He opened the door and leaped to the sidewalk. "Milton!" Flugle wailed. "Come back here! I put up your bail out of my own pocket!"

But by then Horace was halfway down the block, jet-propelled by des-

peration. He reached Ye Olde Gifte Shoppe and hurled himself through the door.

"Clarence!" He skidded to a stop in the dusty gloom of the interior. "Show your face or else I'll start to take this place of yours apart!"

Two jack-o'-lantern eyes popped up from behind the counter and blinked at him, separately.

"Good evening," Clarence said, the pointed tip of his right ear twitching twice. "Why, it's Mr. Milton! Come to buy another gift? Dear me, just when I was closing up my shop and moving to another location, too."

"No!" cried Horace. "I want you just to take them back! I can live with money's lack, but free me from this dreadful curse of talking thus in silly verse and penning counterfeited money." The fix I'm now in isn't funny!

"I'm sorry," Clarence said firmly, "but I can't do it. All sales are final. If I didn't make that rule, people would be forever trying to get their money back. You know how people are, never satisfied."

Well, at that Horace got even more excited and he almost exploded, trying to explain to Clarence that he didn't want his money, he just wanted to give back the gifts, with all the explanations coming out in those jingling verses until Horace almost screamed from sheer frustration. And in his excitement he said some things he shouldn't have, because Clarence drew himself up to his full four feet and told Horace he couldn't take back any goods, he was closing up shop for lack of customers and had just finished packing the last of his stock and there wasn't room in the crates for a single item more.

"I'm going to try the Sixteenth Century, this time," Clarence said. "They'll have more faith in my merchandise. Nobody believes me in this century of yours—nobody but you, and even you aren't satisfied. Now good-by, Mr. Milton!"

Horace looked around and saw it was true—the shop was empty except for several big packing-cases already nailed up and one Clarence was just getting ready to close. He started to put the lid on and at that Horace became more desperate than ever. He began to beg and plead in such heart-rending verses that at last Clarence weakened.

"All right," he said. "Just to be obliging I'll exchange one of the gifts for any other gift you choose. But I can't exchange them both and I can't take them back. It's impossible; this is my first sale in goodness knows when and if I check in at the home office, without even one sale on my books, I may not get another chance. So that's the best deal I can make and I'm

stretching things to do it. Now which gift do you want to return—and what do you want in exchange for it?"

Horace didn't even have to think. He said he'd keep the gift of verse and turn in the gift of making money—because no matter what people thought, they couldn't put you in jail for talking in rhymed couplets. Then he named the gift he'd take in exchange. So Clarence took Horace's hand and mumbled:

"Dibbery dobery, flummery flobbery; even exchange is no robbery."

"There," he said, "it's all done. And don't worry about what happened today. Now that the gift's gone, the evidence is gone too. Well, good-by, Mr. Milton."

When Horace's case came up for trial, there wasn't any evidence against him—just a blank piece of paper nobody would believe had once been a counterfeit hundred-dollar bill.

So the judge let him go, though he gave him a very stern talking-to first, to which Horace answered not a word. In fact, from the moment he stepped out of Ye Olde Gifte Shoppe that second time he had scarcely opened his mouth except to eat—no matter what was said to him, he just smiled and didn't answer.

He's never been in any trouble since, and you may even know him—a very nice-looking chap in his late thirties, going just a little bald, with an extremely attractive wife who does all the talking when they're out together. The reason for that is because there in Ye Olde Gifte Shoppe, when he realized he had to keep the gift of verse he chose the gift of silence, too.

So the two pretty well even each other out except at home, where Martha has got quite used to hearing Horace comment on the day's news in couplets and quatrains. And in fact, listening to Horace discuss the Dodgers' chances for the pennant is as good as hearing someone recite "Casey at the Bat."

Martha would be quite upset if Horace ever changed, because she soon saw where his talents could be put to a commercial use. So she didn't let him go back to bookkeeping. She steered him into a new line and now Horace is just about a millionaire.

You know all those hundreds and thousands of greeting cards they sell on Mother's Day and Father's Day, and Christmas, and anniversaries and just about every other day? You must have asked yourself a hundred times where they get all the inane verses on those cards. Well, here's the answer:

Eighty percent of them are written by Horace Milton.

Next time you get one, read the verse out loud. You're almost sure to recognize the style.



Illustrated by MILLER POPE

In Lew Werneke's mind,
it wasn't his son but Lew himself, out there
opening the season at short for the Blues.
And just as Lew had failed,
his son would fail.

► By FRANK O'ROURKE

Second-Hand Dream



LEW WERNEKE HAD RIDDEN ALL NIGHT on the eastbound Limited, unable to sleep, swaying against the train's motion on the worn leather seat in the deserted washroom, drinking innumerable paper cups of water, smoking until his throat was a sandpaper lump; and now he occupied the front-row box beside the Blues' dugout, blind to the color and boisterous uproar of opening day. He watched his son, who stood before him in the fine white uniform that was not yet bloodied in league play, and the words refused to come. He had dreamed of this day for twenty years; his son needed the right words before his first game; but speech was a frozen jumble of fear on Lew Werneke's tongue.

"Well," his son said, "time to go."

"Jim," Lew Werneke said, "don't get the buck—"

"Okay, Dad," his son said. "Now you sit back and relax."

Lew Werneke repeated, "Relax!"—staring helplessly as the home-plate meeting dissolved and the Blues took the field. His son ran with them, the peg went down to second and around; it was opening day. His son was playing shortstop for the Blues, up for his first try

in the big show, and Lew Werneke sat like a lump of quivering blubber. "Relax!" he said again. "My God!"

The first pitch went in and Dascoli's arm signaled the strike. Lew Werneke tried to sit back, and found his hands clamped vise-tight over the rounded box rail; and just then the Blues' traveling secretary, Hal Rogers, dropped into the adjoining seat. "Always a thrill," Rogers said happily, "starting another season. Everything all right, Lew?"

"Fine," he said. "Fine, Hal."

"Why not stay a week?" Rogers suggested. "You didn't really mean to start home tonight?"

"Yes," he said. "Got to. . . . Business."

He knew how Rogers and the Blues felt about him, despite this friendly gesture. He had gone to spring training with Jim, and the Blues had accepted him gladly; but the weeks passed and he continued to advise Jim, until they branded him a mild type of the interfering father. He had returned home before camp broke, before he hurt Jim's chances. But they couldn't keep him from opening day, this day above all. He missed him; he felt that like heart-beat and breath, and today was the climax of everything worth-while in his life.

"You must feel proud today," Rogers said.

"No time," Lew Werneke said absently. "That comes later."

Rogers gave him a quick, compassionate stare.

"Why, yes, that's true," he agreed.

Lew Werneke watched his son as the Giants' lead-off man drove the ball sharply into the hole between third and short. He saw the Blues' third baseman cut in, make the scoop and quick snap throw for the game's first out. Jim had come over fast, ready for the pickup, and Lew Werneke wanted to curse the third baseman for hogging another man's chance; then he laughed inwardly at himself.

"Nice play," Rogers said. "We've got a solid infield this year, Lew."

"Yes," he said. "Pretty solid."

He hadn't laughed with humor. He had thought like a bushy on that play, forgetting that third basemen in the majors made a routine job of such cut-offs. He was thinking like a minor leaguer, the way he had played for ten long years, before he accepted defeat and bowed out of baseball with his dream unfulfilled. Watching his son, Lew Werneke felt the past flood back upon him, as though today was the only fitting moment to remember his own career, while witnessing the start of his son's.

Rogers was talking and the crowd-sound blanketed the field, but to Lew

Werneke it seemed he could hear his son's breath and feel his son's body tense for every pitch. He felt all that, for he had crouched on the same brown earth long ago, and had thrown his big chance away. He fumbled blindly for a cigarette. "Here, Lew," Rogers said, and held a lighter below Lew's shaking hand. Lew Werneke said, "Thanks"—then froze on the rail as Dark topped a dribbler on the grass and Jim rushed in for the tough chance.

"Slow," Lew Werneke said aloud. "Slow up, Jim!"

In spirit, he was on the grass with his son, no time to judge a clean hop, making the play as a shortstop must, scooping and throwing in one motion; and dropping the ball with his son, letting it pop from his clawing fingers. Dark was safe, and Lew Werneke watched his son's long arm and fingers arch stiffly and reach for the ball with exaggerated slowness. Jim had missed his first chance, and Lew Werneke was sick in his heart.

"He's young," Rogers said. "It takes the kids a couple of years to master those slow rollers."

"Sure," Lew Werneke said. "A couple of years."

Then the game was rushing before his eyes, paralleling his own past, bringing back the memories and the fear. He looked down at his hands where one trademark of the game remained fresh on him. He had that callus on the left palm, beneath his little finger, the thick callosity of all right-handed hitters. He had that, and others, from batting the countless fungoes to his son. If only, he thought bitterly, he had spent more time, worked more with Jim on going to the left, just as he himself had needed it so badly in the past. . . .

Lew Werneke had begun his career in 1919. He had many faults; he was a rawboned farmer with more guts than finesse; but he worked doggedly to improve, and made the Association in his fifth year. He felt that two seasons of improving his batting, and going to the left on ground balls, would earn him the big chance to make good. His batting average rose, he moved more surely to the left, but he remained in the Association. He was 30 in 1929, his playing years nearly gone, when the Blues bought him for a spring tryout.

He married Nellie before going South the next spring, and pushed himself to the limit in the grapefruit games, fighting for a place on the roster. The Blues' shortstop was getting creaky and Lew Werneke started on opening day for the Blues. There was no reason to get the buck, blow sky-high, but he went hitless, and, worst of all, went to his left on the ball that meant the game, reached

down for the scoop, tripped, and sprawled in the dust. Much later that afternoon, sitting in the locker-room, the Blues' manager spoke from the near-by office:

"—down too long. Afraid he'll always think like a bushy."

Lew Werneke played a few more games, but he knew there was no hope. When the Blues traded their veteran for a younger shortstop, Lew Werneke didn't wait for his orders. He went home that same night. He couldn't go down to the Association again, admitting his failure, joining the other has-beens in oblivion. He stayed at home, bought the filling station, and, when Jim was born, his plan took shape.

He acted the fool that first year, examining the baby's hands and feet, making sure his son had quick reflexes. He waited impatiently for Jim's fifth birthday; on that day, giving his son a glove and a bat, the whole meaning of Lew Werneke's life was formed. The station was a success and he could manage leisure time in their back yard, teaching his son the beginning fundamentals of the game.

Those were good, full years. He watched Jim grow, a daily estimate that was mostly imagination, of course, but like gold in the heart's bank. And best of all, Jim loved baseball, wanted to play, was never too tired for practice. Nellie was in full accord with his plan, but she wanted part of their son for her own. Lew Werneke tried to be fair, and they talked many nights about Jim's future; but they always returned to Nellie's greatest worry:

"How can we be sure he'll make good?"

"He will," Lew Werneke said.

"But, Lew," Nellie said. "What if he fails?"

"He can't," Lew Werneke said. "I won't let him."

"All right," Nellie said, "but I'll never forgive you if he does fail, and it hurts him."

"Just believe in me," Lew Werneke said. "He won't fail."

Lew Werneke taught his son carefully, brought him through the midge league, beyond the awkward age, into Legion ball at 15. Day after day, in those summertimes, he stood at home plate in the local park, nagged by the memory of his own failure, seeing the identical fault in Jim's play, the inability to go left. Lew Werneke hit ground balls across the faded grass and relived his own failure a thousand times; but it was good to remember as Jim improved. For here was his vindication in future years, a kind of second-hand victory that would wipe out the past. He hit thousands of grounders at Jim, yet he was never satisfied. He felt that Jim was weak

to the left; and the next spring, beginning the same schedule again, he had his first serious quarrel with Jim.

Jim wanted to go swimming and take his girl to the Saturday matinees. Lew Werneke was furious, that first Saturday afternoon. They quarreled at dinner, and Jim went upstairs and slammed his room door as a kind of protest; at the table, Nellie poured more coffee and said gently:

"He's hurt, Lew."

"I just tried to talk sense," Lew Werneke said.

"Remember your own high-school days?" Nellie asked.

"Sure," he said, "but this is different."

"High school is never different," Nellie said. "Growing up means many things for a boy. Swimming, movies, a nice girl like Judy Meeker. Wasn't in our senior year you gave me your ring, Lew?"

Lew Werneke smiled reluctantly. "All right, Nellie. I'm wrong, but you know Jim has to practice."

"Well," Nellie said, "work it out, for heaven's sake. Jim's ambition isn't lessened just because he wants to see a movie. Go upstairs and talk with him."

Lew Werneke went upstairs and apologized, and realized that Nellie was right. Jim was eager to practice, but Lew Werneke had almost forgotten his son was still a boy. "Look," he said, "Maybe we could work out before school on some mornings; then when school lets out, you name the times. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough," Jim said. "How about tomorrow morning at seven?"

"If your mother'll get breakfast earlier," Lew Werneke said.

Jim smiled and thumped one fist into his glove. "She understands, Dad."

"Yes," Lew Werneke said. "I guess she does, at that."

FROM that time on, Lew Werneke and his son seemed to grow closer together; and, best of all, there was no longer a doubt about Jim's ability. He was outstanding in Legion ball, and the next summer he starred on the town's fast semi-pro club, in a league equivalent to Class C pro ball. Lew Werneke knew that his son had the potential, for he watched Jim through the same eyes that all scouts viewed the youngsters. Jim weighed a hundred and eighty and stood six-one when he graduated from high school; and that was the day Lew Werneke told Nellie to lay in an extra supply of beer and sandwiches. He was ready for the scouts, and they came on the run.

They talked Class D contracts and bonuses while Lew Werneke remained coldly aloof, weighing the offers and

hastily narrowing the field to just one scout from the Blues, an old pro he had known in the Association. One night after Jim was asleep, Lew Werneke and the Blues scout, Packy Donlan, had the showdown talk.

"Let's stop kidding," Lew Werneke said bluntly. "I know a ballplayer as well as you do. Jim can go all the way."

"Fine," Packy Donlan said. "Let's stop kidding, Lew. How much?"

"What do you think?" Lew Werneke asked.

"I'll lay it on the line," Packy Donlan said. "I can go to twenty thousand, but no more. And we want him."

"I don't want a lot of money," Lew Werneke said. "I just want him to get the best damned chance in the world, and this is how I want it: a five-thousand bonus, enough so Jim'll know he's worth serious attention, not enough to give him the swell-head. Send him, to your best Class B farm club right now—"

"Lew," Packy said, "he's young. Give him a chance to settle down. I was thinking Class C."

"You're wrong," Lew Werneke said coldly. "I know my son, and I know baseball. Class B this summer; next year I want him in Class A, no matter how he hits or fields. The third year he goes to your triple A club, he stays there, and he gets his big chance the fourth spring."

"You're crazy," Packy said. "I can't promise that, Lew. You know baseball better than that!"

"That's exactly my point," Lew Werneke said. "I know baseball. I know how a hundred kids are ruined every year because they're pushed too fast, how another hundred are wrecked because they aren't brought up quick enough. There's a good excuse for it; no front office can know every kid in their farm system that well. But I know my son, I know what he can do, and what he'll become if you listen. Within four years he'll be the Blues' shortstop, or he'll never make the grade. And I say he'll make it. Take the deal or leave it, Packy. Other clubs are waiting—and the Blues will need a shortstop in less than four years."

"Let me call the front office," Packy Donlan said. "We'll see what they think."

"One more thing," Lew Werneke said flatly. "This is between you, me, and the front office. Jim is never to know. I've got confidence in him, but it might give him the buck."

"All right," Packy said. "Give me two hours."

They took his deal that night, and Jim was all smiles next morning, signing the contract and packing to catch the afternoon plane. Driving home from the airport, Nellie cried a little, and then said, "Will he be all right, Lew?"



"Sure," Lew Werneke said. "He'll gobble up that Class B."

"I don't mean baseball," Nellie said. "It's only that he's so young—and he's never been away from home."

"Don't worry," Lew Werneke said, covering his own fear with a smile. "A boy has to grow up sometime, Nellie."

"I know," Nellie said, "but I can't help feeling bad."

Lew Werneke felt bad, too, but it wasn't about Jim's first time away from home. This was the beginning of another part of his plan, in which he no longer had direct control over his son. He couldn't give Jim tips, the advice, the encouraging words; and he worried continually about Jim's going to the left on those tough ground balls. He decided not to visit Jim that summer, and Nellie agreed, each for different reasons. Lew Werneke didn't want to upset his son, and Nellie finally realized that Jim was old enough to be out from beneath her motherly shadow.

Jim came home in mid-September with a fine season under his belt, still a boy, but changed as only baseball could mature a boy. Jim was a pro now, with answers and arguments for Lew Werneke's thoughts. That merely showed the change in baseball tactics over the years, and it made Lew Werneke prouder than ever of his son. Jim wondered if he could stick in Class A the next year, and Lew Werneke spent many hours explaining that A ball wasn't much different, just another step on the ladder; and Jim went back to prove that, playing great ball and raising his batting average to .294 for the second season. Lew Werneke knew that Triple A would be taken in stride then; that three years was just enough before Jim got the big chance. If, he thought, Jim can go to the left.

Jim played the full schedule at short on the Blues' Triple A club the next summer, fielding well and batting an even .300. The Blues called him up for spring training, and Lew

Werneke's plan was approaching the climax. He wanted Jim ready for the test in every way, physically and mentally, and one other way that couldn't be properly defined. That was the quality any boy must have to make good; the quality that never came out until the boy hit the majors. Some called it spirit, or guts, or savvy; whatever it was, a boy must show it, to stay on top.

Lew Werneke talked long hours that winter, and Jim listened intently, but it seemed that he wasn't paying the same attention as in past years. Lew Werneke worried about that, and when he decided to attend spring training and Nellie wouldn't go, he failed to understand. Jim thought it was a fine idea, but Lew Werneke had the strange feeling he really wasn't needed. Still, he had to go; this was the last lap, the big chance, and he couldn't fail Jim. And he still worried about Jim's going to the left.

During spring training he kept Jim at the field after practice was over, and batted ground balls across the smooth green grass, hitting at least two-thirds of them to the left side; and that, among other things, angered the Blues' manager, Don Shelby, and made Lew Werneke realize that his welcome had worn thin. Before he started home, he knew that Jim had a chance to open the season at short, and he gave his final advice:

"Don't strain yourself on the trip North, Jim lad. Those games don't count."

"I won't," Jim said. "You know cold weather doesn't bother me."

"I know," Lew Werneke said, "but—the stadium is different. That opening day does something to a man."

"Sure," Jim said easily. "If I'm still around then, Dad, it means I've got a good chance this year."

"Chance!" Lew Werneke said fiercely. "It means you're the shortstop, and don't ever forget that. And don't get the buck."

"I won't," Jim said calmly.

"One more thing," Lew Werneke said. "Going North, if I were you, I'd sneak in a little extra work on ground balls. To the left. You can use a little polish there."

"All right," Jim said. "And listen, you're coming to opening day."

"I'll be there," Lew Werneke said thinly. "You know I'll be there, Jim."

Lew Werneke drove home and waited through the endless weeks before opening day, running the business in a daze of thought. Old worries raced through his mind: Was Jim in top shape, using the proper bat? Was the new glove breaking in properly, those new shoes shaping to the feet? Was Jim getting enough practice, going to the left? Always Lew Werneke



He looked at his hands, where one trademark of the game remained fresh. He had that callus on the left palm, the thick callosity of all right-handed hitters. If only he'd spent more time. ...

thought of Jim going to the left, tripping, sprawling in the dust. He remembered Nellie saying long ago, "If he fails, I'll never forgive you."

Lew Werneke packed his bag two days before it was time to leave, and then Nellie wouldn't go, saying she couldn't stand the tension. He had understood that, and he knew that one game was all he could take, but that one game meant everything. And now he sat in the box while twenty years passed like lightning before his eyes, and he was frightened almost to death. Jim was out there where Lew Werneke couldn't help, and this was the day that counted most of all.

"Say," Hal Rogers was saying from a great distance, then suddenly near by, "you've still got those calluses, Lew."

Lew Werneke looked up and opened his hands wider, staring at the palms, then up and across the field. "Yes," he said. "Guess so, Hal."

"How many ground balls did you hit to Jim?" Rogers said. "We were trying to guess the other night."

"I don't know," Lew Werneke said. "I never counted."

"No," Rogers laughed kindly. "I don't imagine you did. But it paid off, Lew. The kid's got fine hands. Eddie Miller was the fastest I ever saw, and some of the boys were saying that Jim is almost as fast."

"No," Lew Werneke said quickly. "That's not true. I saw Miller; he was faster."

"I won't argue," Rogers said, "but Jim is plenty good."

Lew Werneke tried to watch the game, wanting only to be left alone, without conversation; just allowed to sit and mind his own business. They were trying to butter him up, he thought, bragging up Jim and knowing Jim was young, needing experience and chance, and much work to the left. Lew Werneke groaned softly and forced himself to watch the play.

Jim moved before him as the innings passed, coming off the field, drinking at the fountain, stepping into the on-deck circle, standing in for his first time at the plate, going down on a called third strike as Maglie caught the outside corner with a sharp curve. Jim came back to the dugout and Lew Werneke thought, "Maybe we didn't hit enough; maybe they've found a weakness and he'll never hit the size of his hat." Then Jim was trotting out again, the game was in the fourth inning—the fifth—and Jim was at bat for the second time in this tight pitching duel.

The Giants had scored twice in the third on Irvin's homer, and Jim came to bat in the sixth with a man on first and nobody out. Lew Werneke strained his eyes, trying to catch Don

Shelby's signal from the third-base line. They shouldn't bunt, he thought, not two runs behind! Let Jim swing, or put on the hit-and-run; Jim was good at hitting those bloopers into right field. He wanted to shout at Shelby, lean across the rail and tell them in the dugout; then Maglie pitched to Jim, the ball was going down, and Lew Werneke knew everything was being done the wrong way. "Ah!" Rogers said. "That's the boy!"

Jim had swung late, the runner was breaking, the ball was just over Lockman's outstretched mitt, dropping softly along the line into right field and rolling dead on the grass. Lockman and Williams were racing back, Mueller was coming in, and the Blues' runner was all the way into third base as Jim rounded first and then returned. Hal Rogers slapped Lew Werneke on the shoulder and yelled, "Now we're back in the game, Lew!"

Lew Werneke said, "Maybe," and watched only Jim, forgetting the score and the next batter, even the fact that the Blues had a chance to tie or go ahead. Jim took a five-step lead, and Lew Werneke, watching Maglie suspiciously, wanted to cry, "Not so far, Jim, three steps is plenty!" Then Maglie delivered and Jim broke, and the ball was a screaming liner into the big hole between Irvin and Thomson, bounding off the wall, evading Irvin, a tiny white dot chased by Thomson. The lead runner was in, Jim was past second base, coming into third, and Thomson had the ball and made the long throw to Dark on the short grass. Lew Werneke cried, "Hold him up!" and saw Jim flash around third and dig for the plate, with Shelby waving him on.

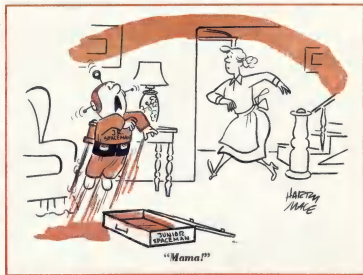
Lew Werneke stood, Rogers jumping beside him, and saw the next batter crouch behind the plate and signal the slide to Jim as he came down the line. Dark had the throw; he turned and made the fast snap to Westrum; Jim was sliding, fading away on the outside as Westrum took the peg and dived for the tag. Dascoli vanished in the dust cloud, then appeared magically with long arms down in the safe sign. And Jim was up, slapping his pants and getting a quick handshake from the batter as he came toward the dugout. Rogers was saying, "Tied up, Lew. What a slide! Now we'll win it!"

Lew Werneke said, "Good chance," and felt a glow of pride, but only for a moment. Jim had slid well, but his right knee was too near when he crossed the plate. And they shouldn't take such chances with nobody out and the good hitters coming up. Shelby ought to know better.

Jim was at the fountain now, washing his mouth, then turning up the dugout alley, walking toward the near end, grabbing a towel from the trainer, wiping the dirt from his face, grinning happily as someone spoke from the bench. Jim came to the end step, and Lew Werneke leaned forward, for this might be the only chance he had to tell Jim. . . . He didn't know what he wanted to say, but he had to. He cupped his hands and took a breath. Suddenly Rogers grabbed his arm and turned him, pointing down the line toward the bleachers.

"Look there," Rogers laughed. "Big fight! Happens every opening day out there, same two fans, year after year."

"Sure," Lew Werneke said, staring at the turmoil, the people, the cops



coming down the aisles. He jerked away and faced the dugout, but Jim was gone, was sitting on the bench, and the chance was gone. He thought then, "They've put Rogers here to keep me from talking with Jim. They're doing it on purpose, damn them!"

Time was called, Durocher was on the mound with Maglie, and the Blues' runner was on third base, having gone all the way around on the throw in. Durocher walked off, to a chorus of boos, and Maglie stayed in the game; and the fly ball went to deep left field, was caught and thrown in, but with no chance of getting the runner who tagged up and scored the third Blues' run that put them ahead. The crowd was cheering, and Rogers was all smiles, and the Giants escaped further injury as Maglie retired the last man. When Jim ran out to start the seventh, Lew Werneke slumped back and tried to smoke, and felt the rising fear in his chest.

The Blues were ahead, could win this opener, but that made it worse for Jim. If the Giants began hitting those bad balls to short, Jim might throw the game away. *If they start hitting on the left side, Lew Werneke thought, if Jim failed, Jim couldn't go home, he couldn't go home, Nellie would hate him, and what could he do then?*

"Want a beer?" Rogers said.

"Beer?" Lew Werneke said thickly. "Oh—no, thanks."

"Better have one," Rogers said. "We'll need it, these last three innings."

"No," Lew Werneke said again, but Rogers was gone up the aisle, a pleasant man, well-liked by everyone, but a man standing guard on Lew Werneke. He crouched forward in his seat as the inning began, and the first pitch was smashed past the third baseman into the deep hole. A sure hit, Lew Werneke was thinking; they couldn't blame Jim for missing that chance. And then he saw Jim in the hole, making the backhand stop and throwing from that off-balance position, the hardest play and the longest throw on the field, making a bullet throw that caught the runner by half a step. The crowd came up, roaring approval, and Rogers was back, pushing the paper cup between his hands, forcing him to take it and smell the beer and bring it unwillingly to his lips.

"A great play," Rogers said. "How that kid can go to the right! How about that, Lew? The kid's got it!"

"Good play," Lew Werneke said, and drank sparingly. He hadn't realized how dry he was, how good the beer tasted, until now. He drank again, and suddenly the cup was empty, and he was on the rail, watch-

ing his son. He wished Rogers would go away, let him sit alone and watch Jim and wait for the end. The Blues retired the side and came in, and Lew hoped that Jim would glance his way; but Jim ducked into the dugout, and when Maglie set them down, his son ran back to position without a look toward the box. . . .

The eighth inning passed without luck for the Giants, and the Blues went down in order, Jim popping weakly to third base for the final out; then they were into the ninth, last chance for the Giants, and Lew Werneke was clutching the rail with both hands, his gray flannel suit wet through with sweat, his mind hoping that every out would go up in the air.

"We've got it," Rogers said.

"Not yet," he said. "Not until the last out."

He watched Mueller build up a full count and single to center, and the sacrifice worked as Dark dumped the pitch and advanced Mueller to second. Lockman fanned and Lew Werneke told himself it was all over, Jim was beyond the danger.

"Seel!" Rogers said. "It's in the bag, Lew!"

But Irvin walked and Durocher came down from third base to talk with Bobby Thomson, and Jim edged toward second, watching Mueller, then trotted back to position. Lew Werneke wanted to shout, "Not so far to the right, Jim," for it seemed that Jim was over-shifted, the gap between his glove and second base far too wide.

Bobby Thomson walked, filling the bases, and someone appeared at the end of the Blues' dugout and signaled to the bullpen. Don Shelby came up the step beside the bat rack and watched his pitcher closely. Westrum was standing in and Durocher was talking, and the Giant bench was up, shouting at the mound.

Jim seemed nervous, moving back almost on the grass, much too far to the right. Lew Werneke seemed to hang, suddenly, in the present and the forgotten past. He watched his son and waited for the pitch; and prayed silently. For it was sure to come, it could end no other way. Before the pitch and the sound of the solid smash, he was with his son out there, thinking, begging, "Left, Jim, left!" For he knew it was going to come.

Then the ball was a streak, eluding the pitcher's frantic dive, skittering over the grass onto the rolled dirt, a short step on the shortstop's side of second base. The runners were off and Jim was coming over to the left, and Lew Werneke closed his eyes and bent his head.

Jim would miss it, the game was gone, and the trouble would start in his heart. Why, he thought numbly,

why hadn't they worked longer to the left?

He heard the roar and Rogers was pounding his back, and he looked up to see the Blues coming off, Jim between two players, grinning broadly as they slapped his back. Lew Werneke said, "What—"

"What a play!" Rogers shouted. "A beautiful play. Behind the bag, diving, flipped to Dutchy for the force—there's your ball game, Lew. Can that boy go to the left! . . . I ask you, Lew, what's your secret, man? Train all our kids your way, and we'll never lose!"

Lew Werneke said, "He made the play?"

"Made the play!" Rogers said. "Lew, he's been making those plays for two years. Either way, he goes the same. Don't you know how good your son is, Lew? He's the fastest man to the left I've seen in twenty years. Give him a season under his belt and then look out!"

"You mean that?" Lew Werneke asked.

Then Jim was breaking away from the Blues and running toward him, reaching over the rail, grabbing his hands in those dirty, sweaty fingers, grinning and showing the tears that cut the facial grime, looking up at Lew Werneke and smiling like a boy and a man, all at once, in his father's eyes.

"Well," Jim said. "How about it, Dad?"

LEW WERNEKE wanted to kiss his son, and then remembered where he was, and coughed to hide his emotion, and failed utterly as the tears welled up in his own tired, red eyes. He managed to say, "All right, son—all right!"

"Give me half an hour," Jim said. "Watch him, Hal. He might get lost in this crowd."

Then Rogers was holding his arm, turning up the aisle, and Lew Werneke watched his son out of sight into the dugout, into the tunnel leading beneath the stands. Rogers was moving slowly, holding his arm, and suddenly Lew Werneke realized that his best years were just beginning, all the good years he and Nellie would watch their son.

"Let's go down to the dressing-room," Rogers said gently. "Have a beer with the boys, Lew."

Then he knew that Rogers had understood, had known all the time; that all the Blues had understood; and it was just as good as though he had made it himself and was now in showers, laughing and soaping and feeling the good tiredness and the joy of youth.

"Yes," Lew Werneke said. "Let's do that, Hal. I can use a beer." •

One Was A Murderer



Seven men and one woman walked behind those swinging doors. But only six men and the woman walked out again.

By LUTHER LOCKE

ONLY THE SHUFFLING of booted feet and an occasional nervous cough interrupted the silence in the bar of Dowe's Hotel, in Raymondville, New York. Even the thin wisps of stale tobacco-smoke, hanging unsteadily like miniature wind-blown cumulus clouds under the low ceiling, seemed to increase the tenseness of the scene. A little earlier the old tavern had rung with the boisterous talk and laughter of seven men and a woman. Now, one of them lay dead on the veranda while the others stared in stunned disbelief at the physician, Dr. Charles Evans.

"One of you is a murderer!" he had just said. He walked stiffly toward the porch where the corpse was stretched under a blanket. In the door-

way he turned. "All of you remain where you are until the police arrive," he warned. "Don't touch anything."

The woman was the first to speak. "But which one, Doctor?"

"That, Mrs. Dowe, is for the troopers to determine," he replied, going outside into the chill October afternoon.

It had all started two hours earlier, when Joe Jessmer sauntered into the tavern, waving a cheery greeting to a half dozen of his friends as he strode to the bar and ordered a beer. Mrs. Dowe, proprietor of the hotel, served him. For the next quarter hour Jessmer moved around among his companions. He drank two more beers. Suddenly he

staggered to a table and sat down, clutching at his stomach and groaning.

Mrs. Dowe went to his assistance.

"What's the matter, Joe?" she asked. "Ulcers bothering you again?"

Jessmer nodded as he was seized with a new cramping convulsion. Beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. His face and mouth twisted into a ghastly grin. His eyes rolled back into their sockets until only the whites were visible.

The six men with whom he had been drinking a few minutes before crowded around to learn what was the trouble, and Mrs. Dowe went to the kitchen for bicarbonate of soda. "He shouldn't be drinking, with those stomach ulcers of his," she muttered. "Some of you boys help him out to the porch. I'll be right back."

Presently the woman returned with a glass of water in which she had mixed baking soda. "Here, Joe," she said in a motherly voice, holding it to his lips. "Drink this. It will make you feel better."

With difficulty the man gulped it down, then almost immediately lapsed into a coma, breathing heavily.

Fearful that his condition was more serious than she had thought at first, Mrs. Dowe hurried back into the tavern and telephoned Dr. Evans in Norfolk, who was the nearest physician though ten miles away.

It was almost an hour before the doctor arrived, and by that time Jessmer was beyond help. One convulsion after another was raking his rangy frame. The doctor shook his head. "He's going fast," he declared, watching closely. "Can't last more than a few minutes. We'll try to get him to the hospital."

Even before three of the men standing near-by could carry him to the physician's car, however, Joe Jessmer died.

While they were waiting for the State Police, Dr. Evans questioned Mrs. Dowe about what had happened. She said Jessmer appeared all right when he came in, but collapsed after drinking his third beer.

"Who was here, besides you?" Evans asked.

The woman motioned toward the six men, still standing around.

Dr. Evans eyed them critically. "Anyone else?"

Mrs. Dowe shook her head. "No." One by one she named them at the doctor's request.

They were George Barr and his brother Tom, Larry Faber, Lewis Wells, Fred Granger and Corky Hammond.

"You were in the room all the time?" Dr. Evans asked.

She nodded. "I wasn't out from behind the bar, until I saw Joe was

sick. Then I went to the table where he'd sat down."

Dr. Evans looked around. In addition to the long bar, open at one end near a door leading to the kitchen, there were a half dozen wooden tables near the walls.

"Which one was Jessmer sitting at before you carried him to the porch?" he asked.

The woman pointed.

Turning back to the bar at which no one was standing, Dr. Evans stared at it thoughtfully. "You say all six men and Jessmer were drinking beer?"

"That's right."

"I see only six glasses, Mrs. Dowe. Where is the seventh?"

Mrs. Dowe became confused and wrung her hands. "I didn't touch a thing on the bar after Joe took sick," she wailed. "You know he had ulcers. He's had attacks before."

She stared at the doctor in sudden alarm. "You don't think I—"

Dr. Evans said, "Mrs. Dowe, this was not an attack from stomach ulcers. They don't act that way, nor kill so quickly. This man died from poisoning. Strychnine, I'm sure. An autopsy will tell. If that's what it is, one of you here is a murderer!"

The police arrived shortly thereafter—Sergeant M. A. Lefever and Trooper L. J. Stoneham, both from Troop B, New York State Police. Following a hurried conference with Dr. Evans and the coroner, who came with the police, Jessmer's body was removed to Norfolk for an immediate autopsy. The viscera was sent for analysis to Dr. Francis Purro, pathologist at the St. Lawrence County Police Laboratory.

Joe Jessmer was well known in St. Lawrence County. Once a prosperous farmer, the depression of the early thirties had hit him hard. He lost his property and began working in the lumber woods and paper mills.

When the mortgage on his farm was foreclosed and he was forced to vacate, Jessmer and his wife Lida and their three small children rented a house on the fringe of the Raymondville swamp. It was a desolate, boggy tract of a thousand acres on the great St. Lawrence plain, on the northern slopes of the Adirondack Mountains. Superstition and the lore of the north country had given it a bad name.

Strange things happened in the swamp. Children lost in it were never found. Criminals, seeking refuge from the law in its gloomy depths, quickly came out and surrendered—or disappeared. Hunters gave it a wide berth despite the great flocks of wild fowl that fed there.

Old-timers insisted that anyone who lived near it was inviting trouble.

Illustrated by HARRY ROSENBAUM

There was a widespread belief among the country people that the ghosts of old Bill Bullard's followers (who had tried to establish a communist community there in 1894 and perished when driven into the morass by infuriated settlers) had put a curse on all who later came there to live or work.

The Jessmers were no exception. Joe soon was laid low with a stomach ailment which prevented him from working most of the time. Lida became ill and was unable to do her usual household chores. The children, once healthy and sturdy, turned wan and sickly.

STATE POLICE, however, were not impressed by the sinister curse of the swamp. They were especially skeptical of supernatural shenanigans, after the coroner's autopsy. Examination of the contents of the dead man's stomach disclosed he had died of a lethal dose of strychnine, just as Dr. Evans suspected. Nor was there much doubt in their minds that someone in the Dowe Hotel bar—one of the seven persons there when Jessmer died—had slipped the death potion into the unfortunate fellow's beer.

It was true, as Mrs. Dowe and George Barr told them later, that Jessmer, during a particularly acute ulcer attack, had said he would rather be dead than the way he was, and that he might "bump himself off" some day. But everyone could think of numerous easier and more practical ways of committing suicide than with strychnine, and, according to the seven people in the tavern that Saturday afternoon, Joe appeared to be in good spirits and was in no suicidal mood when he came in.

Sergeant Lefever was particularly interested in the six unwashed glasses still on the bar, and in the seventh glass which had disappeared during the excitement while Jessmer was being carried to the veranda and Mrs. Dowe was obtaining the bicarbonate of soda in the kitchen.

Making a rough chart of the bar on a sheet of paper, he marked the position of the six glasses. From Mrs. Dowe, with the corroboration of the elder Barr and Fred Granger, he learned where each of the six men had stood; he marked this on the chart.

"Did any of you move around between the time Jessmer came in and when he was taken sick?" he asked.

Each man in turn said he had not. This was confirmed by the proprietor. "Only Joe walked from one to the other of his friends," she declared. "He was all over the place. He always was. He never stood still long at a time."

Instructing Trooper Stoneham to watch the six glasses so the remaining

beer in each could be preserved for analysis, Lefever went behind the bar and studied the drainboard. He saw no dirty glasses. On the opposite side of the sink there were a score of clean ones. These were dry. He thought one in the front row was cleaner and more polished than the rest. The others appeared to have been put down wet and left to drain dry, while this one might have been polished with a towel. But he couldn't be sure.

There was no accumulation of water in the sink, and a steady flow ran through it from the wide-open tap. It seemed obvious that the contents of Jessmer's glass had been emptied down the drain, the glass washed, wiped and placed with the other clean glasses on the drainboard.

Suddenly he turned to those in the room. "Who emptied and washed Jessmer's glass?"

There was no reply. Lefever studied the faces of the six men and Mrs. Dowe for some telltale evidence of guilt, but there was nothing.

When prolonged questioning of Mrs. Dowe and the six men produced no further significant details, Sergeant Lefever telephoned his commanding officer, Captain J. C. Broadfield, of Troop B, at Malone, for instructions and additional assistance.

Immediately Sergeant John J. King was placed in charge of the investigation and with him to Raymondville came Sergeant J. P. Snell and Trooper Jack Ashley, three of the most experienced and proficient men in the homicide division.

WITH no specific charges to lodge against the seven suspects, all were ordered to go home and remain available for further questioning.

When Sergeant King arrived at the scene and learned the facts so far assembled, he considered the possibility that Jessmer might have committed suicide. But from all who knew the man, he heard the same story. Jessmer had mentioned ending his own life, but it was agreed this was merely talk.

King already had assigned two troopers to visit drugstores to learn if any of the suspects had purchased strychnine recently. Moreover the seven were subjected to renewed questioning and their homes were searched, both for evidence and for a possible motive.

Twenty-four hours later the results of the investigation of the six men and Mrs. Dowe had revealed interesting information but no evidence upon which to base a murder charge.

Mrs. Dowe was almost immediately cleared of suspicion. A kindly soul who had treated Joe almost like a son because of his troubles, she had no

motive for wanting the victim out of the way. Jessmer still owed her some money she had loaned him at one time, but she was not worried about getting it.

As far as Sergeant King could determine, the other six suspects all had been friendly with Jessmer.

George and Tom Barr, Larry Faber and Fred Granger were loggers employed in the lumber camps when there was work. Lewis Wells and Corky Hammond were migrant laborers who worked in the paper mills and on WPA jobs when there was nothing else; both had been around Raymondville more than a year.

Almost every Saturday all of them congregated in Mrs. Dowe's bar, where they drank beer and visited. It did come out, however, that Jessmer owed all but Wells sums of money ranging from a few dollars to \$50, the latter borrowed from Granger three months before. Granger admitted he had attempted to collect the loan on several occasions. Jessmer, he said, kept promising to return it, but had not done so.

George and Tom Barr, tough loggers who had lived in the vicinity many years, had once had trouble with Jessmer when he was employed in the same lumber camp with them, but they insisted the misunderstanding had been straightened out months before.

Hammond, a chunky, surly character whose cheek constantly bulged with a wad of tobacco, was adamant in refusing to answer any questions concerning his past, particularly before appearing in Raymondville. Eventually, however, he admitted having served a short jail term for assault. But he insisted it was merely the result of a barroom brawl and not, he thought, a criminal offense for which he should have been punished. He always liked Joe and never had any trouble with him except once over a poker game when he had won most of Jessmer's weekly pay. Joe had accused him of cheating, but later apologized.

Wells was the only one of the six who appeared never to have had any kind of disagreement with Jessmer. He had met Joe when they were working on a WPA project the previous spring, and they got along well together, he said. Asked if Jessmer ever had borrowed money from him, he laughed.

"Hell, no!" he replied. "I never had any to loan him."

As Sergeant King studied the reports of the investigations of the six men, he was still convinced that any one of these men would be capable of murder, with enough provocation. They were all men of violent passions who had lived rugged lives in a rugged country, yet were not likely to pre-

meditate such a plot as it appeared probable had ended fatally for Jessmer. If they killed, it would be in the heat of momentary anger. Moreover, there was not one of them who could not have thrashed the victim easily; they were big, rawboned fellows, while Jessmer was slight of stature and emaciated because of his siege with stomach ulcers. And they would hardly have used poison. Guns or knives were their style.

Yet one of the seven persons in the tavern bar had, in fact, engineered a diabolically shrewd murder plot and carried it out to the point of perfection. Murder by poison, he knew, is the most difficult of all homicides to prove. There must be motive, possession of the poison and the opportunity to administer it. Of these, only the latter, least important of all, could be applied with certainty to any of the seven suspects.

MEANTIME, Sergeant Snell and Trooper Ashley visited the house near the swamp where the Jessmers lived. Mrs. Jessmer had been in the hospital under observation for two weeks, awaiting an operation. The three children had been staying with a relative in another town while their mother was ill.

The place was sparsely furnished with the few things Joe and Lida had been able to salvage from the foreclosure on their home. The one they had now was a gloomy old house, isolated from the village and neighbors and badly in need of repair. A hundred yards in the rear tangled underbrush, rank vegetation, scrubby pines and swamp elders loomed ominously, stretching away to the west as far as the eye could see.

An hour spent searching the three rooms on the first floor produced nothing of consequence. They found part of a package of rat poison on a kitchen shelf, but it was dusty and had not been touched for weeks.

Upstairs in a single, unfinished attic room, partitioned by a ragged curtain, there was a double bed and three cots. Some clothing hung on nails in the walls. There was a hamper containing soiled articles. Under a window Snell saw a small trunk. Opening it, he found two worn undershirts, a half-filled bottle of unidentified medicine and an ancient .32-caliber revolver. There was no ammunition for it. This gun he wrapped in one of the tattered T-shirts and stuffed in his pocket.

A battered dresser produced nothing of importance except a packet of legal papers having to do with Jessmer's farm mortgage and its subsequent foreclosure. Articles of clothing and some cheap costume jewelry were the only other items it contained.

Certain that they had overlooked nothing, Snell and Ashley returned to Raymondville, where Sergeant King had set up temporary headquarters.

He was busily engaged in examining a complete autopsy report and other data sent from the police laboratory. Jessmer, the autopsy surgeon advised, suffered from a stomach ulcer, not sufficiently advanced to have caused death. Moreover, the strychnine had been in his stomach not more than two hours before death, placing its administering at the time between arrival at the tavern and his death.

The beer glasses, the pathologist reported, contained no poison in the dregs of beer. Examination of fingerprints on them revealed Jessmer had not handled any of the six.

The other clean glasses found under the bar, including the one Sergeant Lefever thought had been washed and wiped clean, bore no evidence of strychnine. Nor were there any identifiable fingerprints on them. Even the sink under the bar and the drain trap had been examined. If any fluid containing the lethal poison had been emptied in it, the evidence washed away before the police arrived.

As the mystery became more baffling and seemed to defy solution, Sergeant King decided to start over from the beginning. Once more the seven suspects were questioned at length but again they admitted nothing. Neither did they change their stories in the slightest.

A re-examination of the poison books of drugstores in Norfolk and other near-by towns, in which purchasers of poison were required by law to register their names, revealed no errors or oversights in the first investigation. Mrs. Jessmer, who up to this time had not been informed of Joe's death on her physician's advice, became hysterical and had to be quieted with sedatives when visited in the hospital by Sergeant King. Later, when questioned for a few minutes, she said she knew of no one who would want to kill her husband.

"Joe was a good husband and father," she sobbed. "He never harmed anyone. The only trouble he ever had was when we lost the farm and our money during the depression."

Eventually Sergeant King decided to return to the Jessmer home to double-check on the report submitted by Troopers Snell and Ashley. He took Snell with him.

Downstairs everything appeared to be exactly as when Snell had been there previously. Even a sink full of greasy dishes was untouched. But in the attic room they were glancing around when Snell suddenly grasped the sergeant's arm. "Look," he said, "the trunk's gone!"

Sergeant King turned quickly. At the spot under the window at which Snell was pointing, there was an area on the floor with less dust than elsewhere, and of a size that would have been covered by a large box or trunk.

"Are you sure it was there?" King questioned, skeptically.

The trooper nodded. "Yes. Right there. See where there's no dust?"

Satisfied that Snell knew what he was talking about, King turned his attention to the rest of the room. The drawers in the dresser had not been disturbed, Snell was positive after examining them again. Nothing else seemed to have been touched.

"Someone wanted that trunk out of here pretty badly," King muttered as they descended the stairway.

The matter of when the trunk had been removed made little difference to the troopers. Obviously some person had come for it at night, after Sergeant Snell had made his first search of the house, and King cursed himself for neglecting to have the place watched. Actually there had appeared to be no necessity for such action at the time.

There were no dwellings within a mile of the Jessmer place. The troopers now visited the nearest homes, questioning the occupants to see if they had noticed anyone at or near Jessmer's house since Joe died. None had.

Returning to Raymondville with this new mystery plaguing them, King suddenly remembered the revolver Snell had found in the trunk and brought away with him.

"Say, Jack," he asked, "where's that gun you found in the trunk?"

"We sent it to the laboratory for identification, before you came down," he replied. "Why?"

The sergeant shrugged as he picked up the telephone to request a number. "If it wasn't Jessmer's, it may be registered in someone else's name. We'll see."

"You don't think the trunk was his, then?"

"My guess would be it wasn't, the way things have turned out. I figure someone was afraid it might be identified. Whoever it was got it out of the house as soon as there was an opportunity."

He was thoughtful a moment. "We'll have another look at those six men. You and Ashley get after 'em right away. Put the pressure on, this time. If one of them doesn't come through, we'll lock 'em all up on suspicion of murder."

Snell said, "Would it do any good to question the Jessmer kids?"

"I had Stoneham talk to them day before yesterday," King replied. "They are too young to understand." "They might give us a lead, though."

The sergeant shook his head. "I doubt it. None of 'em seemed to have heard the names of any of those six fellows. They just looked scared, and began to cry."



Downstairs everything was as it had been. But in the attic, Snell suddenly grasped Sergeant King's arm. "Look," he said, "the trunk's gone! See that area where there's no dust?"

The conversation was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. King listened attentively, then said thanks and hung up.

"Up at the laboratory they say the gun is an old one with the number filed off. They put it under the lights but can't find any record of ownership. I guess that's out."

Snell held up his hand. "I just happened to think of something. Remember that old shirt I wrapped the gun in?"

"That's an idea," Sergeant King interrupted. "Where is it?"

"I think it's in the glove compartment of Ashley's car," Snell said.

A SHORT time later the two officers had the ragged old T-shirt and were examining it. On the collar band there was a faint ink stain which appeared to be what was left of a laundry mark. But it was indistinguishable. "Maybe we've got something at last," King exclaimed. "If the laboratory can bring it up. If it was Jessmer's, it's just another lead down the drain. If it belonged to someone else, it could be our man."

Examination of the old undershirt by laboratory technicians proved nothing conclusive at first. With ultraviolet lights the old laundry mark was brought up. Yet there was nothing to identify it with any particular laundry or person. When an effort was made to compare it with identification numbers on other garments owned by Jessmer, none were found. But there was nothing unusual about this. Jessmer had been a farmer. His wife did the family washing. Nothing had been sent out to the laundry for years, and of course there would be no marks.

But it was his only clue and Sergeant King could not afford to ignore it. At his orders troopers and deputy sheriffs began a check of laundries and cleaning establishments over a wide area.

Ever since King first entered the case, he had stuck doggedly to the conviction one of those seven persons in the Dowe Hotel bar with Joe Jessmer when he died was his murderer. If King had had his way, he would have jailed them all without bail on suspicion of murder. But the district attorney was against it, insisting there was not even sufficient evidence to prove homicide had been committed to lock them up as material witnesses.

"I'm beginning to think the fellow was that stupid he might have taken the strychnine himself," said the D. A.

This suspicion was strengthened when a clerk at Whipple's drugstore in Norfolk, discovered that a man who signed the name of "J. Jessmer" in the poison-book had purchased strychnine six months before. He said he wanted

to kill rats. The entry had been overlooked when the first search was made because it was at the end of an old book.

Upon being questioned by King, the clerk, Bernice Wilson, said she did not make the sale, nor did she know anyone by the name of Jessmer. No one in the store could remember what the purchaser had looked like.

In spite of the district attorney's reluctance to move against any of the six men or Mrs. Dowe, King had taken the precaution of having all watched closely. But here again there was no payoff. None of them acted suspiciously. All were constantly available for questioning, which was so frequent that the Barr brothers had consulted an attorney, complaining they were being persecuted by the State Police.

This, then, was the situation, when a week later King received an encouraging telephone report from one of his troopers who had been searching for the identification of the laundry-mark on the old undershirt. A laundry-owner in Potsdam had identified it as one he used several years earlier. It was recorded in the name of Lewis Wells.

There was no concealing the sergeant's elation as he cut the conversation short, instructing Trooper Ashley to return to Raymondville at once. King then dispatched troopers to bring in Wells, one of the six men in the hotel when Jessmer had been taken ill and had died.

BUT when Sergeant Lefever and Trooper Stoneham sought to find him in his usual haunts, he could not be located.

Immediately the search for Wells swung into high gear. No longer was the district attorney loath to act when he heard the news. A bench warrant charging suspicion of murder was issued for his arrest.

Twenty-four hours later Wells was picked up by Potsdam police in the Murphy Hotel. He was drunk.

When Wells became sober, he was subjected to long questioning by Assistant District Attorney Allen Curley, Sheriff James McCormick and King. He denied ownership of the shirt as well as any connection with the death of Joe Jessmer.

Eventually, however, Wells was trapped when he told several conflicting stories. Shortly afterward he confessed to putting the poison in the victim's beer.

Wells said he and Lida Jessmer had carried on a romance, unknown to Joe, for six months. He had known the Jessmers when they owned their farm. One summer he had worked for them. When they came to Raymondville he was employed in Potsdam. He lost his job there and a little

later was assigned to a WPA project on which Jessmer was working.

Joe asked him to come to live with him and Lida while he was in Raymondville. Wells intended to do this and actually had his trunk sent to the Jessmer house. But he never went there himself except when Joe and the children were away. He said he had taken away the clothing in the trunk when Lida went to the hospital, but never had removed the trunk because he didn't want to attract the attention of neighbors. After Joe died, he went for it one night fearing it would be identified and connect him with the murder.

WELLS charged Mrs. Jessmer had urged him to poison Joe so they would not be interfered with in their romance. He said he had planned the murder for months but never had the opportunity to carry it out until the day in the Dowe Hotel. He had purchased the strychnine at Whipple's drugstore, signing Jessmer's name in the poison-book, hoping thereby to make it appear Joe had committed suicide, in case the death was not attributed to stomach ulcers. He had carried enough of the poison with him all that time to do the job, throwing the remainder away.

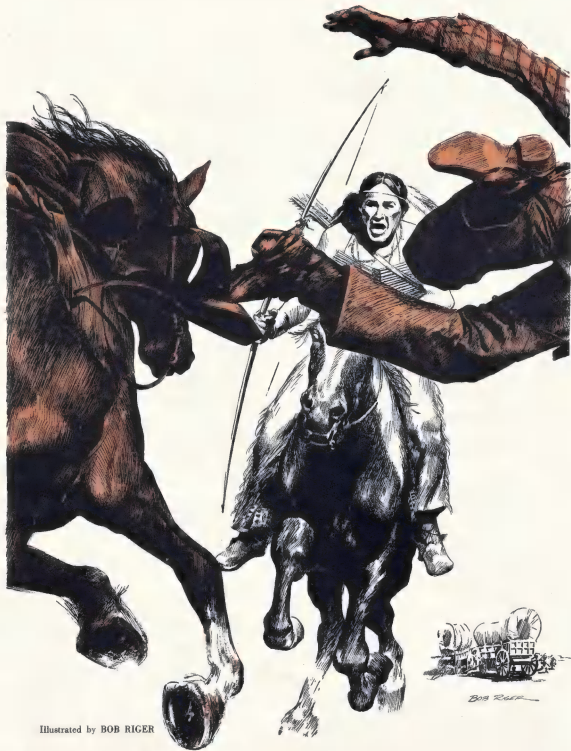
Wells said he had dropped the powder in Jessmer's beer at a moment when the others, and Joe, had their backs turned to him. Later, when the other men took the sick man to the veranda and Mrs. Dowe was in the kitchen for soda, he had emptied Joe's glass in the sink under the bar, washed out the glass and wiped it clean to remove all fingerprints. He also had removed the stopper in the sink so the water would run out and wash away any residue of the strychnine that might remain.

Lida Jessmer, when told in the hospital that Wells had implicated her in the murder of her husband, denied she had instigated the plot, but admitted she knew her lover intended to go through with it. She said Jessmer had beaten her many times, and had threatened to kill her. Her present condition and the need for surgery, she said, was the direct result of his abuse.

Both Wells and Mrs. Jessmer were indicted for first-degree murder.

Wells was brought to trial, convicted and sentenced to death. Upon appeal he was granted a new trial on a technical error in the record and permitted to plead guilty to second-degree murder. He was sentenced to life-imprisonment in Dannemora Prison.

Lida Jessmer later pleaded guilty to manslaughter. She was committed to Bedford Hills Prison for Women, for a term of two to four years. •



Illustrated by BOB RIGER



A BLUEBOOK NOVELETTE

Jed dreamed of Oregon at the end
of the trail as other men
dreamed of the end of the rainbow.
Yet the closer he came,
the more he wanted to keep going.

■ By J. L. Bouma

Wagons - ROLL!

THE SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND SMELLS of Westport Landing brought a nameless hunger and longing from within Jed Adams. It seemed to him the world was moving West, and that should he fail to take his place in the ranks he would be forever lost in a whirl of uncertainty.

Men unloaded river boats, stacked boxes, bales and cargo along the wharf. Wagons rumbled by and teamsters cursed the crowded street. At dusk, Jed left the riverfront, fingering the lone double eagle in the pocket of his town suit. He had come this far; it would take more than twenty dollars to pay his passage to Oregon. And so far, no one had wanted to hire a nineteen-year-old who resembled a kid schoolteacher.

He found himself walking swiftly up a side street and he slowed his steps because it seemed ridiculous to be walking fast when he had nowhere to go.

He knew he should relax until the moment for movement was at hand, but loneliness was an ache and he welcomed the cheerful lamplight of a tavern. Shouts and laughter met him at the open doorway; he hesitated, the smells of tobacco and whisky thick in his nostrils. Then he smiled, for he associated these intangibles with comradeship.

Three or four mountain men in buckskins lounged against the bar. Bearded river crewmen, farmers in homespun, gamblers wearing box

coats and tall beaver hats and a few stray women caroused at the tables. A piano tinkled and a banjo picked up the tune; someone hooted into an earthen jug, keeping time, and another man yelled, "Hoedown!" Feet stomped the board floor.

Jed approached the bar. He nodded a friendly greeting to the man on his right, a lean and tight-built man in cowboy boots, levis and a buckskin vest. A black hat was set back on the man's rusty hair; there was a faint smile on his high-boned face that glowed deep brown in the lamplight. Then he grinned, and recklessness became part of the grin, and flickered in his eyes.

The bartender came up. He had a swarthy, thick-lipped face, and he studied Jed with a quizzical look. "Well?"

"Whisky."

One of the women came up as Jed filled the glass. She was a pudgy thirty, with go-to-hell eyes. She brushed a lock of faded blonde hair from her white forehead and smiled at Jed with her mouth. "How about buying me a drink, honey?"

Jed flushed. He couldn't really afford to buy himself a drink. Then he grinned. "Sure. I can only afford one, though."

The bartender had waited. He took a bottle from beneath the bar and upended it over a glass. The woman frowned it at a gulp. She nudged Jed and picked up the double eagle he had put on the bar. "You ain't fooling me, 'can't afford' it!"

She handed the gold-piece to the bartender, and slyly nudged Jed again. "Thanks, honey." He watched her sit down with three men at a table near the door.

Jed turned to watch the dancers, sipping his drink slowly, thinking all this was part of the westward trek. He put down his empty glass, reluctant to leave; then he looked from the bar to the bartender who was wiping glasses.

Jed said, "I'll take my change now, if you please."

"What change?"

"I gave you a twenty-dollar gold-piece. Two drinks sure didn't cost that much."

The bartender scowled. He came to stand opposite Jed. "Look, kid, don't try your tricks around here. You put out a silver dollar. Two bits for your drink, six bits for the lady's. Now beat it!"

Jed was stunned. He said hoarsely, "It was a twenty, mister! I ought to know—it was the last of my money. Ask the lady—she picked it up. She'll tell you it was a twenty."

"Hey, Maude! This kid says he gave me a double eagle. How about it?"

"If he did, it was the first gold-piece ever made out of silver!"

Jed stared at her, dazed, hearing odd snatches of laughter. He looked around and saw half-amused, half-disinterested smiles. The cowboy at Jed's right winked, but Jed scarcely noticed. Outrage rose in him. He

called harshly, "Damn it, I want my change!"

Irritation crossed the bartender's face. "Throw him out, boys!"

The three men sitting with the woman rose. They were big and roughly clad. Two approached Jed, grinning at what was to come; the third man stopped to lean against the bar.

Jed felt a moment of fright, the pleasure at hearing laughter and sharing warm comradeship gone now. They would kick him out like a dog. It was as if the world were discarding him. Jed stared at the men. He couldn't take on even one, let alone two—not when they came that size! And then the dogged knowledge came that he would at least try.

The cowboy came up beside Jed. He said in a mild voice, "That'll do. I'm standing the kid a drink." He grinned at the bartender. "One for the lady, too."

Jed turned to him, started to say, "I don't want a drink, I want my change!" But there was that small wink again, telling him to relax.

The man said, "Corey's my name. Belly-up, kid." He glanced briefly at the three men who had resumed their seats, then at the bartender. "Make it the same for the lady."

"She drinks only the best, friend." "Not with me, she don't. Not this early in the evening."

The bartender studied Corey a second, then shrugged and filled a third one. He said, "Cowboy's buying. Maude—" and took the glass down the bar.

Jed took a deep breath. "I wasn't lying—it was a twenty I gave him!"

"All right, so it was a twenty." Corey's voice was impatient, though the grin hovered around his eyes. "Hold your horses, kid. Just maybe we'll get that change back for you."

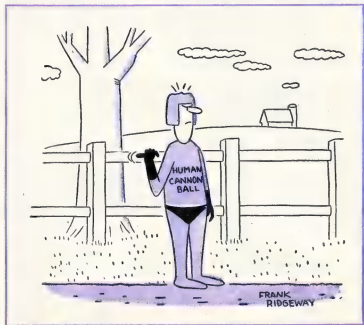
"Maybe the woman switched coins."

"She didn't switch nothing," Corey said, annoyed. "You got took, that's all." He paused to light the twist of a black cigar. "Where you from?"

"Boston. I been trying to get on with one of the Oregon-bound trains as a teamster, but they're just not hiring."

Corey looked Jed up and down, and a corner of his hard mouth twisted upward. "Not with you wearing that dude outfit, they ain't. You want work as a teamster, you got to look like one." He was grinning again, but not at Jed. "Here comes trouble. Give a man room, kid."

The woman came up, smiling at Corey, and Jed moved a couple of steps away. Corey had as much as told him he was a fool, and now he felt both angry and uncertain. Jed glared at the bartender, who ignored him, and he emptied his glass and



turned to leave. Then he remembered what Corey had said about holding his horses, and his heart began to quicken. He moved a little closer to Corey and the woman, and he heard Corey say, "How about that dance?"

"It'll take a couple more drinks to get me in the mood, honey."

Corey laughed. "Hell, I'm broke, Maude!" He took her arm. "Come on," and he grinned.

"Turn me loose, damn you!" the woman said, but Cory held her wrist tightly, still grinning.

Jed heard quick steps coming and turned to see one of the men come past him to grab Corey's shoulder, saying harshly, "No rough stuff in here, friend." He took the woman back to the table.

Corey watched them, still grinning, his right hand resting on the butt of his six-gun. The crowded room had hushed for a moment, but now the uproar broke out again.

Jed looked at Corey, feeling an odd disappointment—why, he didn't know. "Well, it would've taken more than us to handle them three," he said.

Corey gave him a look of mockery, and his voice was dry. "Yeah, because you'd get in my way." He swept the room with his wild grin, hitching at his gunbelt. "Watch this, kid."

He walked quickly and lightly toward the trio. One of the men, sensing trouble, rose to take his place at the bar. Corey ignored him. He put both hands on the table and said clearly, "Next time I ask you to dance with me, honey—you'll dance."

Jed saw it coming. The man on Maude's right half rose to throw a fist at Corey. But Corey moved like a whip. He smashed the man in the face and, without pause, knocked the table over and kicked the second man in the stomach. Then he whirled on the man at the bar, and said flatly, "You looking for something?"

The first man, Jed saw, was getting up, one hand fumbling inside his coat. Jed never knew how it happened, but suddenly there was a bottle in his hand. Then it wasn't in his hand but flying through the air, and he was yelling, "Watch it, Corey!"

Corey's sinewy body twisted, a gun appeared in his hand the moment the thrown bottle struck the man's shoulder. The man grunted. A derringer fell at his feet. Corey laughed. "He don't know it, kid, but you saved his life." He motioned with his gun. "Sit down, the three of you. And throw your hardware against the bar."

Jed watched, fascinated, as the men obeyed. There wasn't a sound in the big room. Jed came up behind Corey, and his voice trembled a little. "We'd better get out of here."

"Hell, I ain't finished my drink."

He holstered his gun and went back along the bar, and Jed had the impression that he was watching every man in the room. Then Corey flicked a brief glance at the bartender, and said curtly, "Give the kid his change."

"What the hell you talking about?"

The grin was tight on Corey's face, and there was a wish in it, a wish for trouble to rise quickly. "I'll say it once more. Give the kid his change."

"Now look here—" the bartender began quickly. But his last word was still hanging there when the gun again appeared in Corey's hand; it roared and the glass front of the cash register shattered.

The bartender paled. "All right, all right—"

"Crud," Corey said contemptuously. "That's all most of 'em are."

Jed felt shaken. He looked at the half-angry, half-contemptuous expression on Corey's face and it seemed a merciless emotion raged within the man. He had the feeling that a wrong word or a false move could bring it flaring to the surface.

The bartender came up. The hand that put the money on the bar trembled. Corey said, "Count it, kid, while I finish my drink."

"It's all there."

"Then let's find us a good place to drink. Maybe we can come up with a job for you."

Silence followed them outside, but they hadn't taken a dozen steps when the door opened. "Wait a minute! Please—"

It was Maude. Jed had never seen such a ravaged look of hope on a woman's face. Her hands gripped Corey's arms in a hungry sort of way. "It wasn't my fault, honey. They won't let me dance unless a man buys at least—"

"Yeah, yeah," Corey said impatiently.

She continued to cling to him. "I don't want to go back in there tonight, honey."

"Why tell me about it?"

She tried to force an arm through his, tried to turn him up the street.

"Take me with you!"

"You missed the boat ten years ago," Corey said irritably. "Face up to it and get back to work."

She released him slowly and stepped back, and her face stiffened with an odd dignity. In a low voice she said, "I don't know you, but I can tell you this much. I'm not the only one who missed the boat."

Corey looked at her for a moment, and then he said gently, "You better go back inside, Maude."

"Come and see me." She looked at Jed for the first time in a blind sort of way. "Make him come and see me."

Corey turned away. "Let's go, kid. There's things we got to talk over."

As they walked up the street Corey said he'd signed with a train that was planning to roll in two days. "Farb's the captain. There's a man named Henry Oldun who's got ten wagons in the train, and I think I can get you on with him. But first we got to buy you some different dudd."

"You figger to settle in Oregon?"

A strained look settled on Corey's face. He said curtly, "Don't ask me damfool questions, kid. The train's parked on the flats outside Independence. We'll go there first thing tomorrow." He paused, then added in a mocking voice, "If you're sure that's what you want."

"That's what I want."

HENRY OLDUN WAS A stout man. His face was square, his eyes stern, and his heavy black mustache carefully trimmed. He looked Jed over and grunted. "Looks kinda green. What sort of work you do back East, boy?"

"Spent two years in a harness shop. Later I drove a hack."

"Did you have much schooling?"

"Till I was fourteen. I can read and write and add numbers, if that's what you mean." He caught Corey's faint grin, and added, "Hell, a man don't need an education to drive a team of oxen."

"Try looking past your nose, boy," Oldun said dryly. "This trek ain't but an inch to the hop-skip-and-jump that's ahead of us. I'm a storekeeper; got enough supplies loaded to start me in business, and more coming around the Horn. So it might be that I can use a youngster that has some schooling." He paused, then added abruptly, "Why do you want to go to Oregon?"

The question surprised Jed. How could he tell Oldun of the hunger? He looked around at the sea of canvas hoods. "Why do any of these folks want to go?"

Oldun looked at him a moment longer. "All right. Go find Captain Farb and sign up."

Now that he was heading West for certain, Jed searched within himself for signs of regret, but there weren't any. He remembered the cold, and the narrow streets of Boston, then thought that westward lay open country, and the sun. That was enough.

When he signed up he learned there were forty-three wagons in the train, and even before knowing the people he felt close to them. He sensed they felt his way about things, that all their thoughts and spirits had already combined to put a little halo of good fortune above their wagons.

Walking back to town, Jed mentioned this to Corey. Corey listened, a bitter twist to his hard mouth.

"Most of 'em ain't worth the powder to blow to hell," he said. "The good's been worked or beaten out of 'em, and they're all running from something." His lip curled. "Even you."

Resentment worked in Jed. Corey was ten, maybe fifteen years older than he was, and he couldn't understand the man. "That's not true," Jed said. "I'm heading toward something, not running from it."

"Forget it," Corey said curtly, and Jed never mentioned his feelings again.

FARB'S train pulled away from the main bustle of the flats the day before departure, and that evening there was feasting and dancing. Jed met Oldun's family, and a few of the other emigrants. Mrs. Oldun was a pleasant, buxom woman, and Jed liked her on sight. Then there was the daughter, Dorothy, a slender blonde girl of eighteen who, to Jed, seemed to have stepped from a fairy-tale he remembered in childhood.

There were the Harlows, a young couple strangely mated, for Ben Harlow was sickly and complaining, a thin, wasted man whose feverish eyes scarcely left his wife's handsome face. Clara Harlow was a tall full-bodied young woman with a look of healthy determination about her that Jed could well understand.

There was the Green family, nine in all, who crowded a wagon that was the worst of the lot, and who already had earned an unfavorable reputation for borrowing.

The Jason brothers were hill folks, a silent, slow-moving trio in their twenties.

Then there was Farb, the train captain, a tall, thin man with a keenly intelligent face and eyes that seemed always to be piercing the horizon.

There were all kinds, Jed marveled—but they were going somewhere, every one, and he was one of them. . . .

It rained all day the night I left,

The weather it was dry—

The sun so hot I froze to death,

Susanna, don't you cry!

Jed walked round the main encampment fire, seeing the flicker of shadow and light against wagon hoods. He found Corey lounging against a wheel, the twist of a cigar between his teeth, talking to an older in buckskins who sat cross-legged on the ground, a rifle across his knees.

Jed nodded howdy, and Corey broke off his talk as if he didn't like being interrupted. Then by way of introduction he said, "Jacks is scout."

Jacks' long hair was streaked with gray and his face had a burned, chiseled look in the flickering firelight, the skin roughly seamed, the eyes startlingly clear as they touched Jed. He gave a short nod. "Howdy."

A banjo twanged, voices rose again in song. Corey watched the happy circle with set mouth. He jerked away from the wagon wheel as if it scorched his back. "Reckon I'll take a walk."

"You known him long?" Jed said, watching Corey disappear into the darkness.

"Some."

"He's quite a man."

"Quite," the old scout said.

"He got me the job with Oldun." Jed waited for a comment, and when

none came he said, "He's made the trek before, hasn't he?"

"He's made it."

"I figured so, the way he gets around. Why didn't he settle?"

"Ask him." The old scout rose and vanished between the wagons.

"WAGONS—YOLL!"

The call sent blood leaping through Jed's veins. His wagon was near the middle of the train and he ate dust, but he didn't mind. It was a sight to see the swaying column of hoods, the oxen in the traces. Here and there boys herded a few cows along, and women and men walked beside their wagons.

They had no trouble the first few days; then Green pulled out of line with a cracked hub, and there was muttering. It was Corey who trotted up on his bay and lent a hand, and after that it seemed to Jed that the people came to depend on Corey.

Corey was hard and firm in his dealings with the people. Yet there was this about him, and Jed sensed it—Corey did everything as if he were driving himself against his will, and there was mockery in it.

"Bunch of damn fools," he told Jed angrily. "Jameson claims to be a farmer, and he didn't know up from down when it come to straightening that bent axle. Looked for me to do it for him. Hell, I hired to hunt and scout, not coddle a bunch of simple-minded fools."

Jed knew Corey was just blowing off steam, and didn't talk that way to anyone else. He felt it drew them close enough together to ask, "How long since you been across, Corey?"



Corey's head snapped up, and there was that strained look again. "What makes you think I've been across?"

"I kind of thought so, the way you took hold. Then Jacks admitted it when I asked him."

"Jacks talks too damn much."

Jed grinned. "That's not so, and you know it. You just never told me anything, is all, and I wondered."

"Well, it ain't worth telling," Corey said, and rode away. . . .

They followed the Little Blue and passed Fort Kearney. In the evenings the banjo would twang, and people would gather round to visit, to plan, and maybe there'd be singing. Then the Platte was off their right; they crossed the South Platte above Julesburg, and Chimney Rock rose in the distance.

Jed ate with the Olduns. He liked sitting by the cooking-fire, watching the flames lick along the bottom of the iron pot hanging from its tripod. He could see all he wanted to believe in the flames, and when he looked up Dorothy would be there, and they'd smile as if at a shared secret. Then he would forget his dreams and become aware of her as a person. It went like that, and the dreams became fewer. Soon he was aware of her in the mornings, and at odd times during the day—and after a while the image of her was always with him.

Some nights the Harlows came to supper and stayed to visit. Ben to complain of hardships, half hinting that he'd turn back if he could find company. At such times Clara would draw into herself, and once Jed found her watching her husband the way she would watch a stranger.

Corey didn't often show up during the evenings, spending most of them with Jacks, who was a loner himself. It seemed to Jed that Corey had changed and become restless. Perhaps the monotony of slow travel was tangling his nerves. Once he came to Oldun's fire when the Harlows were there, and he sat off by himself without saying a word, staring broodingly into the flames. But Jed noticed that ever so often he would look at the Harlows with a kind of distant wonder and pain; apparently seeing them there evoked some half-buried memory he had tried long to forget.

ONE evening Oldun confided to Jed: "I been doing a lot of thinking about routes to where I aim to settle. Lot of country, Oregon! People scattered out all over, I reckon. Most of my merchandise will be coming by rail before long, but it'll still have to be packed in to the settlement. Don't reckon there's much roads there now, do you?"

"Find out when we get there."

"Might start a freighting business on the side if there's roads to speak of. Then there's hardware to consider. Farm tools, building tools—" Oldun sighed. "There's so much open to a man that he has to keep a tight rein on his thoughts, or go half crazy with planning."

Jed realized then he wasn't the only one dreaming. He supposed all in the train had their dreams, their secret hopes. All but Corey. . . .

Days became weeks, then months. The sun hammered moisture from them, thinned and darkened them, toughening some, weakening others.

A babe sickened and died. Wagons rolled across the grave, and a woman cried.

Farb said in his strong voice, "Many a grave marks this stretch, and there'll be more. But one day these graves, lost though they may be, will be monuments in the hearts of the people that follow, as this grave is a monument in our hearts today."

Farb's proud eyes swept over the land before he lowered his head. "Let us pray. . . ."

A hand slipped in Jed's, when the prayer ended. He did not have to look to know that it was Dorothy's.

They went on. Now the banjos did not twang of an evening any more. At sunset, men hobbled their teams inside the camp circle; boys wandered out with sacks to collect buffalo chips; women prepared frugal suppers. They ate in weary silence and then slept, knowing tomorrow would be no different from today, knowing only that each step, each turn of the wheel brought them a little closer to their goal. Some of them wondered if the goal was worth the effort.

"I cain't say we had it good in Ohio," Green said, "but at least we had a roof better than canvas. This man's gonna be mighty tired once he gets to Oregon." And he would be gruff with his large family, not sure of himself, dreading what lay ahead.

They followed the Sweetwater to South Pass, and stopped there three days to overhaul wagons and harness, to rest the teams for the long trek still to come.

There were arguments—some who wanted to take the Lander cut-off to Fort Hall, others who feared that long



stretch of wilderness and said it would be safer to cut southwest to Fort Bridger and then back up through Soda Springs.

Farb said, "We'll vote."

They took the cut-off through the deep mountains, and they cheered lustily when they sighted the stockade that was Fort Hall.

Jed walked with Dorothy that evening, and she said, "Pa's been talking to you, hasn't he?"

"He mentioned a few things."

"Are you going to work for him, Jed?"

"I don't rightly know." Jed hesitated. "I been talking with Corey. He says California's quite a place."

"You admire Corey, don't you?"

"Sure. Did I ever tell you how he got me out of a tight in Westport?"

"You told me twice." She stopped.

"Are you going with him?"

"I keep thinking of that harness shop in Boston," he said. "Four walls, and a coal-oil lamp to work by. Then I think of driving a hack and always ending up where I started. Your Pa asked me once why I was heading for Oregon, and I kind of threw the question back at him because I couldn't explain how I wanted open country so bad it made me sick. And I still don't know, except that I'm happy the way things are, and I want them to stay that way."

"And you're afraid they wouldn't if you settled down?"

"That's what I don't know."

She looked past him, somewhere into the night. And she said softly, "It must be awful not to know. Like Corey. I guess he's thirty or over, but he still doesn't know. You can tell just by looking at him. And he'll likely go on not knowing until it's too late for him to learn. Then he'll end up like the old men who used to sit out front of the store, back home, just sitting there as empty as fruit-jars."

She added: "You told me once, the first time we really talked, how you felt that all the folks in the train were like one body moving West. Can't it stay that way, Jed? Does the body have to fall apart when we get where we're going?" Then she said, "I'm shameless, talking like this. And us not even in sight of Oregon. We're not stopping to make winter camp, are we?"

"Corey says there's no need. It'll be cold going once we pass Boise, but he says there's no reason why we can't make it." He took her hand. "Let's head back."

They followed the Snake out of Fort Hall, and they pushed hard. Near sunset, five days later, the trail crept up a long slope sprinkled with clumps of twisted cedars and rocky

ribs white as scraped bone. Jed, walking beside the plodding oxen, heard a yell:

"Here comes Jacks! Look at him ride!"

The old scout had his pinto at a pounding gallop, his left hand clutching the reins, his right waving a big circle as he came cutting in and out of the cedars.

Farb, at the head of the train, shouted an instant command, and the lead wagon swung from the trail and rolled to start a circle.

At the first shouted warning, Jed looked south, where Corey had disappeared more than two hours ago, to hunt. Nothing moved there. Oldun rode up on his chestnut. Jed grabbed the bridle. "If it's Injuns, I'm going to hunt Corey and warn him—"

"Easy!" Oldun said. And then, "Watch your team!"

"Damn it, he's out there alone!" Jed shouted. "Get off that horse—"

"Too late, Jed." Oldun's voice was oddly quiet. "Look!"

Jed turned and saw a line of horse-men skyline the ridge. Dimly he heard Oldun's quiet voice saying, "Ride out now, and they'd follow. Corey is better off alone. Better get back to your rig."

The oxen were nosing along behind the forward wagon. Jacks came pounding up and slid down while his pinto was still in motion, and he ignored flung questions with a wave of his hand.

Snatches of information reached Jed as he unhitched his team, his hands clumsy with excitement and fear for Corey clawing at his insides. The threat of an Indian attack had curled its little ball of fear in all of them from the beginning, and had mounted in them at odd times to sink again when nothing happened. Now it was there in all its raw violence, and children cried and women looked at their men with panic-strained faces.

"Fifty at least. . . . Maybe they'll ride on . . . or ask for grub . . . or maybe their medicine was good and they're sparking for a fight."

"Jacks says they won't attack this evening—too close to dark. Maybe they'll be gone, come morning—"

The brown enemy remained outlined on the ridge like statues, in the last of the sunlight.

Farb said, "Listen now, all of you! We'll have to dig a pit, and dig it big and deep enough to hold the stock and waterfolds and kids. Unstrap the water-barrels from your wagons first thing. Jordan, I'm holding you responsible for the water. We'll talk about rationing, after the pit's dug. Jacks says we could be here three-four days, and we'll not take chances."

Jed worked the shovel under the pegs on the side of his wagon.

He looked once more between the wagons and saw the long stretch of level landscape, ending at rolling hills that climbed west to the rise where the Indians still sat their ponies. He could see the needle-thin lines of upthrust lances, and he looked away from them and south again—and saw movement in a little draw.

He jumped to the wagon tongue, head forward, eyes squinting, and he saw the rider coming at a slow trot.

"It's Corey! Here comes Corey!"

Jacks came swiftly for so old a man. Jacks muttered, "That'll tempt 'em, like gold tempts a white man."

Farb had his field-glasses to his eyes. "He's carrying a deer over the pommel." He shifted the glasses to the Indians. "They haven't seen him yet."

"Will, the minute he comes out of that draw!"

"You're right— Oh, damn!"

Jed saw it then, the four riders turning their ponies from the crest, bunched at first and riding wide to come between Corey and the wagons.

Jed jumped down and there was Oldun's chestnut tied to a wheel, a rifle in the boot. Swiftly he untied the animal, mounted and turned him between the wagons, heedless of angry shouts. He had the stock of the rifle wedged beneath his arm, his right hand solid around the trigger guard, and he had a view of Corey's horse coming at a gallop and of the four Indians who had spread out now to cut him off. To Jed it seemed the Indian ponies were flying, and that the chestnut was moving at a crawl.

Jed raised the rifle, still clutching the reins with his left hand. He tried to aim, but the target jerked across his sight. He fired, nevertheless, then awkwardly levered another shell into the chamber and fired again.

He saw Corey coming in at that clumsy gallop, the deer bobbing. He could hear the pounding of hoofs clearly now, and the short dog-barks of the Indians. He levered another shell into the chamber, kicking his heels furiously into the chestnut's flanks, riding desperately.

The Indians clung to their ponies like lizards to rocks. The one nearest Corey swung in close and rose to throw a lance. Corey half twisted in the saddle and pistoled him from his mount.

Then Corey shouted furiously to Jed: "You crazy damn fool! Get back to the wagons!"

A second Indian closed in on Corey, a bowstring twanged, and Corey reeled and pitched from the saddle. The horse raced on, panic-stricken; the deer slid and thumped to the ground.

Jed was less than six feet from the Indian when he fired; he saw the

brown body jerk, then fall, to tumble under the pounding hoofs. A shot roared behind him and he reined around, and there was Corey on his knees, the feathered shaft in his back—Corey on his knees firing his six-gun as an Indian tried to run him down.

The unshod pony screamed as it reared, fore hoofs pawing at nothing; then it fell over on its side and the Indian leaped clear. Corey shot him through the chest.

The remaining Indian whirled his pony and raced away at the sight of three riders stringing out from the wagons.

Corey had slumped to the ground and Jed slid down and bent over him. The arrow was wedged solid, high in his back. Jed said, "Jacks and a couple of the Jason brothers are coming. We'll get you back all right."

Corey sat up. "Where's that deer?" "Over there a ways."

Jacks rode up and jumped down. "Injuns coming. Get a move on!"

Corey said, "Don't forget that deer. He's a damn fine one."

They put Corey on the chestnut, where he clung to the pommel. Jed leaped up behind the cantle, and reached around Corey to take the reins. They rode ahead of the Jason brothers, one of whom carried the deer. Jacks followed them, stopping twice to fire before they reached the protection of the wagons. It seemed to Jed that they had come home.

In the chill dawn, Jed sat against a wheel of his wagon. It was the third day since the Indians had wounded Corey; Jed was trying to think how often the shrieking brown horde had attacked since then.

Each time they'd been driven off, but not without loss. Six mounds marked the graves at one end of the pit, and eighteen wounded suffered side by side on mattresses at its other end.

Corey was one of them. The arrow-head had wedged against a bone and Farb, a doctor of sorts, had been unable to push it through in the logical way. So he'd had to cut it out, leaving a gaping wound that was slow in healing.

Clara Harlow had taken over the job of nursing as if she'd been starved for something to do. Or perhaps she felt the need to do double because Ben had proven himself a coward.

With the first attack imminent, Farb had called roll to assign each man a proper place, and Ben Harlow hadn't answered. They'd found him crouched in a corner of his wagon, shaken with fear, and only the threat of physical force had put him, rifle in hand, behind a wheel.

Then when the thunder-rush of ponies stirred the dust, and they heard



The remaining Indian whirled his pony and raced away at the sight of three riders stringing out from the wagons. Corey had slumped to the ground and Jed slid down and bent over him.

the guttural dog-barks, he had gone completely to pieces and had started to cry in a way that made men avoid glancing at each other. Now he lay in his wagon, muttering feverishly about nothing, and only Clara went near him.

Jameson came to relieve Jed. "Anything show yet?"

"Give 'em another half hour."

Jed propped his rifle and slid down into the pit. Clara Harlow had a small fire going, and was boiling coffee. She said, "I used the last of the scrap wood. Next thing we'll have to start tearing down the wagons." She poured Jed a cup of the coffee.

"Why don't you try sleeping, for a change?" Jed asked her. "You were up when I went on guard."

"Lots of time for sleep later," she said vaguely.

"I better go see how Corey's feeling this morning."

Corey was awake and fretful. "Damned if I'm gonna lay here another day."

Jed put his hand on Corey's forehead. "You were still feverish last night, but you're cold as a dog's nose now."

"Hell, I'm hungry," Corey said. "Man—smell that coffee!"

"I'll get you a cup."

Clara came up just then, a steaming cup in one hand, a plate of biscuits and bacon in the other. She gave a small frown. "Can you help him sit up, Jed?"

"Sure thing."

"I don't need help," Corey said gruffly. He took a swallow of coffee, then filled his mouth with biscuit and bacon. Clara slipped the shirt down from his shoulder and looked at the bandage. She smiled.

"It didn't bleed a bit during the night. How does it feel?"

"Like it's mending."

Jed stretched his arms, and yawned. "Guess I'd better get back—"

"Here they come!"

The cry sent Jed racing back to his post, and he saw the brown line, thinner than it had been, but still charging in all its primitive violence.

He heard Clara's voice, "You come back here!" and turned his head to see Corey scrambling out of the pit.

Corey sat down under the wagon, wheezing. "I can't shoot, but I can sure help reload."

As long as Jed lived, he would never forget that attack—the unshod ponies charging, dropping under the train's smashing fire, Corey beside

him, his knees gripping a rifle, loading it swiftly but awkwardly with his good hand.

And then the ponies wheeled and regrouped, and Jed said, "You have it this bad the time you crossed?"

Corey was sweating heavily, and his face was pale. "Bad enough," he said shortly.

"How far'd you get?"

"All the way." Corey gave him a brief glance of annoyance. Then the tight grin was there, and the mockery edged his voice. "Sure, I was a damn fool, too." He turned his head. "Set your sights, kid—here they come again."

Jed fired as quickly and as accurately as he knew how; then he saw one fire-tipped arrow sailing, then another. He brought a pony down, hearing a yell, "Douse that fire!" and he saw the flung rider get up and run for the wagons, then fall to twist over and lie still.

The Indians carried away their dead, and the men of the train held their fire. It was then Jed became aware that three or four of the wagons were in flames, and he started to follow Corey to the edge of the pit when there came an inhuman scream and a figure leaped from one of the burning wagons and came on at a wild run.

It was Ben Harlow. There was a six-gun in his hand, and he was firing it as he ran.

"Stop that crazy fool!" Farb yelled.

Ben came on and Jed threw himself flat as the crazed man fired their way. Then Corey stepped up quickly. "Ben!" he said sharply, and as Ben turned Corey jumped forward and caught Ben alongside the head with his rifle-barrel.

Ben teetered on the edge of the pit, and then lost his balance and fell, to roll down the side where he ended up sprawled out on his back.

Clara ran to him and looked up at Corey, her eyes wide.

Corey muttered, "Sorry, but it couldn't be helped."

"I know," she said, and continued to look up at Corey.

They crossed the Snake and continued on to Fort Boise. Now the Blue Mountains rose before them. Stinging rain and sleet pelted them on the slopes, then there was snow. Jed sat muffled to his eyes in a wool scarf and mackinaw on the swaying seat and watched the oxen's breath form plumes in the thin cold air.

Up ahead, he saw Corey ride up alongside Harlow's wagon, and he knew then that Clara was driving again. Since the Indian attack, an odd bond had drawn those two together, for Ben had ended up worse than useless. He talked to no one, ate his meals alone, and slept wrapped

in a buffalo robe beneath his wagon. One morning Jed had found him huddled alongside a pine tree, the robe covering him like a tent.

"Ben," he said gently. "Ben!"

Ben had glowered out from beneath the robe without saying a word. Then he had covered himself again.

Now they were deep in the mountains, and Grande Ronde lay a day's travel away. Now that they were so near their goal, Jed was still undecided as ever what he should do once they reached it. He seemed to feel that, having come this far, somehow it wasn't far enough, and that if he didn't go even farther, the pull to see still more open country would always fester within him.

Night fell quickly and they made camp in a small clearing. And while the women cleaned the supper dishes, Oldun talked to Jed.

"We'll be at The Dalles in a few days. That's where I turn off. There's a settlement a good day's travel north, and I aim to make it my headquarters. I got a job for you, Jed, if you want it."

"I don't know—"

"This country's gonna live on trade from now on, and we're in the driver's seat. And the harder we work in the beginning, the quicker we get results. Take that shipment of merchandise I was telling you about—that's probably setting in some warehouse in Portland right now, and it'll save time if I can send a man I can trust to pick it up for me and bring it out." Oldun paused. "What do you say?"

"Let me think about it."

Later, Jed woke from a dreamless sleep, a hand shaking him. And as he sat up, he heard Corey's soft voice, saying, "Ben's gone. Pull your boots on. I want you to help me hunt him."

Jed wormed through the hood. Light was spreading thin across the sky, but the trunks of the surrounding pine trees still appeared ghostly against the pale snow.

Jed said, "He's probably around."

"No. Clara woke me near an hour ago. It was snowing some about midnight, and she had told Ben he better get into the wagon. He wouldn't do it, so she went to sleep. Then when she woke up she looked to see how he was, and he was gone. I followed his tracks a ways on foot, but he's got a three-four hour start, so I came back for you and a couple horses. I told Jacks, and the train'll stick here till we get back."

As they climbed on the horses, Corey looked up at the thick gray sky. "Hope she don't snow. If she snows and covers his tracks it'll be hell finding him."

The trail led them an erratic course down one hill and another. It was hard going for the horses in places

where the snow had drifted belly-deep. By the time the pale disk of a sun showed in the sky, they were traversing a wooded slope that ended at a low bank below which ran a narrow stream.

Corey saw Ben first. "There he is!"

He slid from his horse and down the bank and waded knee-deep through the icy current to the place where Ben lay wedged between two boulders, his head under water.

Corey looked up, and a painful bitterness moved like a wave across his high-boned face. He said harshly, "He was going somewhere, wasn't he? Oregon fever in his bones—and this is how he ended up!" Then he tugged the body slowly and gently from between the boulders.

"Poor damn fool—" he muttered.

PEOPLE stood around, silent and stunned. And just as silently they left the grave and turned to their wagons. Clara said hopelessly, "I don't know—we got married just before we left. That was in Illinois. He was wild about going, but I should have known by the time we reached Independence that it wasn't for him. It was all—in his imagination, and he should have stayed home where nothing would ever have happened to him. I knew that, and should have—" She hesitated. "I'm to blame."

Corey stared at her. "You? No, that's wrong, that's wrong! He should have looked inside himself—" That strained look showed around his mouth, and he broke off.

Mrs. Oldun said, "If you're not going back, Clara, you're welcome to stay with us."

"Thank you, no. I'll go on to Portland and sell the rig. I should find work there."

Corey said, "They're starting to roll. We'll go now. I'll drive you the rest of the way."

They came in sight of The Dalles late one afternoon, and camped here as a company for the last time. The trek had ended, the weary miles were behind them, yet they were just starting. Jed knew now what Oldun had meant when he'd said the trek was an inch compared to the hop-skip-and-jump ahead of them.

"Lordy, when I think of all the work waiting for these hands I want to lay down and curl up," Green complained.

And after supper that evening, Corey came to Jed and said abruptly, "You make up your mind about California?"

"You want to go, Corey?"

"Damn it," Corey said harshly, "what do you think I'm asking you for?"

"I don't know," Jed said slowly. "Oldun offered me a job—"

"Well, I ain't hanging around, so make up your mind."

Jed wondered if he'd ever understand Corey. The closer they came to The Dalles, the jumpier the man became, and it didn't make sense traveling all this distance and then wanting to go right on.

Dorothy had asked if the body had to fall apart. Well, it wasn't falling apart now as much as it was breaking up, so that each unit would strengthen and maybe draw other units to spread out and build settlements, towns, cities. Did he owe the body his support or was he free to go his way and leave it behind? And then he knew the answer would have to come out of himself, and no one could tell him what he should do.

He should have looked inside of himself. . . . Strange words, coming from Corey! Jed turned back to the Olduns' fire and hunkered down. Mrs. Oldun was talking with her husband, and Dorothy, her cheeks dusky in the firelight, her sunstreaked blonde hair gathered in a knot at the nape of her neck, brought a chair and came to sit beside Jed.

"It's good to get out of the snow," she remarked.

"We've had it all—heat, rain, sleet and snow."

"Why, there's Clara!" cried Dorothy.

CLARA HARLOW stepped into the circle of light. "I plan to leave early in the morning, so I came to say good-bye now."

"Anybody to drive you into Portland?" Oldun asked.

"I can handle the rig—I'll get along."

Jed rose. He heard himself say, "How do you figure to bring in that merchandise from Portland, Henry?"

"Why—" Oldun peered at him. "—why, I figured we'd double up what we got in the wagons here, so's to leave four-five wagons empty. The boys said they'd drive."

"Well, we can shift that stuff to-night, be ready to pull out early in the morning. Then I can drive Clara in."

Oldun beamed. "Why, now, that's fine! I'll get the boys and we'll get right to work."

Jed moved away, and Dorothy followed him into the darkness. Her hand on his arm halted him, and she looked up at him. "Are you sure, Jed?"

"I'm sure."

"I'm glad. It happened so quick—" Dorothy hesitated.

"I really didn't take a good look inside myself, I guess," he said. "Then when I did I knew traveling on wasn't for me. I could do it and maybe not be sorry at first, but then there'd be you to think about and not be with,

and that's not the way I want things to be."

He went on, "I'm in love with you, and I want us to be married. That's what I want for my life—if you want it too."

She said softly, "I want it, too. Will you kiss me?"

He felt himself blush, and was glad of the darkness. His arms felt awkward around her at first; then it seemed she found her place inside them, and it was all right. He heard her say, "This is where I want to be." She added, "It's going to be good for us. Do you believe that?"

"Yes."

"Because we're going to make it good."

LATER, he hunted for Corey, and learned Corey had gone into town. Jed found him drinking in a saloon, and he came up grinning. "That was a twenty I gave you, mister."

"So you got took."

"Corey—" Jed hesitated. "I'm—I'm sticking with Oldun."

Corey emptied his glass and set it carefully on the bar. Half-regret, half-mockery showed on his face. "I figured it that way."

"It isn't the job. It's—well, it's time I settled down."

"Don't explain to me," Corey said roughly. "You think you're the only one that ever thought of settling down? You think I ain't been through the mill?"

There was a little silence. "It was something you said that made me decide," Jed said. "I took a good look inside myself, and I saw that Oregon was far enough for me." He paused, "Why'd you leave, Corey?"

That strained grin appeared on Corey's face. "Still curious, ain't you? Well, I'll tell you. Three years ago I had me a little place in Kansas. Ran a few cows. Then I got married, and on top of that I got Oregon fever."

Corey stared at his glass. "We got here just about this time of year. I staked a quarter-section and neighbors came from all over, and we threw up a cabin. Anna was with child. Then, come spring, I came into town, a week's trek, and a neighbor woman stayed with my wife. I stopped by the neighbor's on the way back, and they told me Anna and the babe had died, and they'd been buried on the place."

Corey picked up the glass and with one smashing blow broke it on the bar. But his voice was oddly quiet as he continued:

"I should've been there. Time like that, I should've stayed home—maybe then she wouldn't have died. I didn't ever go back—don't even know where the graves are."

He looked at Jed with a weary face. "I just don't give a damn about anything."

Jed didn't say anything. He understood now Corey's wish for trouble if trouble was offered, and his tenseness the closer they had got to Oregon. Then Jed said, "Why'd you come back this time?"

"Damned if I know," Corey said flatly. Then he added in a far-away voice, "They kept pulling at me, asking me to come back—but now that I'm here I wish I hadn't come." He jerked away from the bar. "Let's get out of here."

They walked back to the wagons in silence. Oldun had pulled his wagons close to the main fire, and teamsters were hard at work transferring the freight. Clara Harlow came up. She said to Jed, "I'm glad you're staying with the Olduns. They're fine people." Clara was too healthy a woman to hold on to grief for too long a time, and now she was smiling. "There's so much to be done here, and you'll go far in doing it." She looked at Corey and studied his face. "And what will you do in California?"

A troubled look crossed Corey's face. He said vaguely, "Take in the country, I reckon." He looked down at her. "And what'll you do in Portland?"

She shrugged a shapely shoulder. "A woman can always find work of some kind."

"And there's no thought in you of going back East?"

She smiled. "Not a one. I'd feel myself a failure if I went back now." She hesitated, a faint blush rose to her cheeks, and then she offered her hand as she said quickly. "Good-bye, Corey. It's good to have known you." Then she turned and walked rapidly away toward her wagon.

JED said dryly, "You think it's your fault Anna died, and she thinks it's her fault Ben drowned. Just a couple of damn fools running from something."

Corey turned on him fiercely. "She ain't running! It's me that's been running."

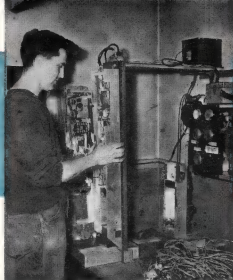
"I'm taking her into Portland in the morning."

Corey took a long, long breath. Then he said flatly, "Like hell you are!" He grinned faintly at Jed and hitched at his gunbelt. "Watch this, kid."

Jed watched him stride after Clara Harlow, take Clara's arm and turn her; then the two of them walked on slowly, and Jed turned away. The teamsters were laughing as they worked at unloading the wagons. Dorothy came to meet him. "Jed—" And all their tomorrows echoed in her voice.

Robot restaurants, below, are replacing lunchboxes all over the country. Vendors include refrigerated sandwich, pastry, milk, coffee and ice-cream machines. *Right: testing the complicated coin change-making mechanism at the Rowe factory in New Jersey.*





Vending machines
have come of age and
at least 6000 small operators
have found a new
frontier that gives them
independence—and
an excellent income.



The Biggest Small Business in the World — ■ HAROLD MEHLING ■ HARRY KURSH

THE TEXAS NEWSPAPERS REPORTED RECENTLY that a San Antonio businessman was going to put out an automatic vending machine that would mix and serve ready-made Martinis and Manhattans. The businessman was immediately visited by another imaginative Texan. The visitor questioned him closely and learned that the new machine would even allow customers to mix the cocktails to suit their own taste.¹⁸ And there would be a choice of olive, onion or slice of lemon peel.

Next day the visitor made his own announcement. He was going to put out another automatic device, he said, one which would be stationed beside the cocktail dispenser. His machine would peddle an automatic hangerover aid—a ten-second blast of pure oxygen.

There is nothing zany about the ambitions of these two Texans. In the last few years, vending-machine manufacturers and operators—engaged in one of the fastest-growing industries in American history—have been outstripping each other daily in a mad rush to cash in on the growing national penchant for service by coin-operated robots. Never before has such a lusty infant industry boomed its way so fast to a new frontier in our economy.

Only a few years ago, vending machines were counted in the thousands. Today, there are almost three million money-making robots raking in an estimated one and a half billion dollars annually. Industry experts are predicting widely that soon there will be close to five million machines and the annual take will soar to more than five billion dollars.

Less than a decade back, the average American identified vending machines as handy sources of supply for cigarettes, peanuts, popcorn and an occasional soft drink. Nowadays, the list of what comes out of automatic dispensers is staggering. A full list would take several of these printed pages; but this sampling should give you a good idea of the picture: lighter fluid, pocket-size electric fans, ice cubes, hand lotions, razor blades, towels, toy trains, hot drinks,

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stationery, neckties, handkerchiefs, one-shot dental kits for travelers, milk and fresh-fruit juices, coal, kerosene, nylon stockings, life-insurance policies and golf balls.

In the service field, who hasn't seen a hotel lobby where you can insert a dime in a typewriter and use it for half an hour, or a shoeshiner which can be used for three minutes at the call of a nickel?

Puzzled theorists are writing volumes to explain why vending machines are breaking all sales records. But it boils down to this: They save time for shoppers by doing away with waiting to be served and waiting to pay. They serve conveniently packaged items. On certain food items, they keep human handling down to a minimum. Also, many items are available to last-minute and forgetful shoppers long after stores have closed. And from the selling side, it makes profit-taking practically an automatic operation.

Actually, the dream of vending-machine enthusiasts is to develop a market in which virtually everything needed for daily living will slide down chutes or pop out of machines ready to be carried home. Meanwhile, ideas for new vending machines continue to cascade onto the American scene just as fast as machines can be designed and operators found to haul in the profits.

The only trick in getting up a new type of vending machine and operating it successfully is to find answers to a few questions, according to the experts. For instance: What is a popular item or service not being sold now by a vending machine? Can a machine be designed to vend it automatically? Will Americans buy it out of a machine? How much of it will they buy?

BACK in 1944 a couple of fellows were looking for those answers. They were Sgt. Cy Melikian and Lt. Lloyd Rudd, and they hit the jackpot. Their story begins at Wright Field, where both were putting in time for the Air Force.

One day, they decided to take a few minutes off from their duties to grab a quick cup of coffee. But when they walked into the post-exchange cafeteria, they groaned. They ran smack into a new sign, "No Coffee Served Between Meals."

"Heck of a way to greet a hard-working GI," said Lt. Rudd.

"Yes," Sgt. Melikian agreed. "There ought to be some other way a guy could get himself a cup of coffee."

That night, Lt. and Mrs. Rudd were paying a social call at the home of Sgt. and Mrs. Melikian and when the time came for coffee, Mrs. Melikian served the group what was then

the new instant-type coffee. Rudd looked at Melikian, and the sergeant returned the glance. No mental telepathist was needed to interpret the sparks that crossed the gap between their brains, and they began to use their spare time working on rough sketches for a machine to dispense hot coffee automatically.

Less than a year after they got out of the Army, when Rudd was twenty-six and Melikian was twenty-eight, they had a robot coffee machine ready. They got permission to test it at a Philadelphia football game. Before the game was over, they found that nearly 300 customers had been willing to buy a cup of hot coffee from a machine. By the end of 1947 they were stirring their way to a revolution in the vending-machine industry and grossing almost a million dollars selling machines and supplies for automatic hot-coffee venders. Today, hot-coffee machines can be seen from coast to coast, in department stores, movie houses, travel terminals, factories, service canteens and office buildings and, of course, at practically every Army, Navy and Air Force base in the country. In fact, a coffee robot was recently installed in the hall of the Texas House of Representatives.

Last year, an estimated 350,000,000 cups of coffee poured out of automatic venders. And this, according to those who know, is only the beginning. Robot-dispensed coffee has made such an impact on the coffee market that many major coffee producers, such as Maxwell House, have established separate "vending-machine coffee" divisions.

Three years ago in New York a young man tried to buy a fresh apple on Forty-second Street. For more than an hour he looked. It was a futile search. Nowhere was there any kind of fresh fruit to be found. If nobody wants to sell them, he thought, why don't they put up machines to do the job? Then he discovered that such machine, called Fruit-o-Matics, were available on the West Coast. They have built-in refrigeration units to serve the fruit chilled and to keep it fresh. He ordered a few units, got them installed in office buildings and, during his spare time, went around to keep them supplied and collect the dimes. Business boomed almost instantly. He bought a few more machines and went into the business full time. Now, his Fruit-o-Matics can be found all over New York. He won't say how much he made last year, but he does disclose that business in 1952 was about 500 per cent greater than in the preceding year. Oddly enough, even a prominent Midtown restaurant, The New Yorker, decided to install one of his machines a few months ago.

Perhaps the idea of pouring hot coffee and selling fresh fruit out of a vending machine is not the most exciting and revolutionary thought of the century. But the fact remains that no one did anything about it until a few young fellows came along, bestirred themselves and did a little investigating. Their questions led to jackpots. Nowadays, however, the search for information has been vastly simplified.

The vending-machine industry has done so well for itself, and the future is so wide open, that operators, manufacturers and dealers have formed their own central co-ordinating agency, the National Automatic Merchandising Association. The organization is now a handy treasure-chest of information and guidance for those who are setting out to carve their own business independence with the coin robots. Genial NAMA director, Clint Darling, at 7 South Dearborn St., Chicago, is always ready to supply answers from his vast storehouse of vending-industry knowledge.

HE can, for instance, tell potential businessmen what kinds of machines aren't yet being made, what kind are, who manufacturers them, where and how much they cost. His office also knows what dealers supply what products for automatic machines and where these dealers are located. The NAMA even publishes a "buyers' guide," a complete directory of detailed information on the entire industry from coast to coast.

This guide, in case you want a soup machine, will tell you that one model is being turned out by the American National Dispensing Co. in Lansdale, Pa. Razor-blade machine? You might try the National Sanitary Sales Co., Chicago. Or if you're interested in the cultural aspects of life, the International Mutoscope Corp. in Long Island City, according to the guide, puts out machines for the automatic vending of magazines and books.

When you observe operations from the association's Chicago office, you learn that even the most unique ideas exploited by machine-minded, money-minded citizens are no longer startling to veterans in the industry. The latest one came from a Wichita man who covered a lot of territory as a roving salesman. One thing he observed about people in all walks of life was that many were constantly complaining about aches and pains which were relieved only by heat treatments. If heat treatment was so popular, he mused, why not an automatic diathermy machine? Now the machine is already on the market in key sections of the country. Some laugh at the thought of it. But growing numbers of men and women are

the way to work are stopping off for a quarter's worth of diathermy treatment and bounding into their offices ready to tackle their jobs with new vigor.

Industry experts agree, however, that the most startling development in the vending-machine cavalcade is the number—in countless hundreds—of men who are pouring into the industry as small-time and part-time operators, only to emerge later as independent, full-time businessmen, confirmed addicts to the coin-robot way of life.

TAKE the case of two World War II Chicago veterans. Both had full-time jobs. Nevertheless, they got interested in a proposition from a new vending-machine outfit. Founded in 1947, the company had obtained a patent on an automatic machine which would sell peanuts piping hot. For their pooled investment of \$1,492, the veterans bought fourteen of the peanut-vending machines and, with the aid of the company, placed them in such places as bowling alleys, bars and rail terminals. They made it a part-time business. During time off from their jobs, they made the rounds of their machines, collecting the coins and refilling the peanut containers. The same company that sold them the machines also sold them peanut products. They kept reserve supplies on kitchen shelves of their apartments, and one of the firm's representatives gave them on-the-job training in proper maintenance of the machines.

In six months, their investment was liquidated and the machines were theirs.

Then they began to expand: they took on more machines and boosted their profits. Finally, they quit their jobs and went into vending machines full time. Today, after less than eighteen months, they own one hundred and sixty-five vending machines. These include machines for dispensing carbonated drinks and candies.

They're not ready to buy yachts, but they're well into the five-figure income bracket, have built their own homes, drive good cars and each, at twenty-eight years of age, sees his future lined brightly with rows of glittering, coin-grabbing robots.

One of them told us, "The possibilities for getting a new start in life in an independent business of your own is practically unlimited in the vending-machine business. We were lucky to get in on the ground floor. Things may get tougher later on—it always does in most new industries. But right now, we're letting our imagination run wild."

Of course, before anyone plunges into a business of this sort he has a flood of questions. He wants to know,

for instance, if the opportunities are really solid. How much money do you need to start with? What do machines cost? How much maintenance is required? Can I start on a part-time basis? How much time do I have to devote to the business? Do I have to know anything about mechanics? Will I need cash to buy my machines, or can I borrow—and liquidate the debt from profits? Can I borrow money on vending machines? Where? How much can I expect to make? Do I need an office, or can I start by keeping records and supplies at home? How do I find locations for the machines? How do I know these are good locations?

These questions are, of course, general. Some who are getting ready to take the plunge have many more questions and much more specific ones. But to get as many facts as possible for BLUEBOOK readers we sat down with dozens of different vending-machine representatives and operators. From all the answers we got to our own questions, it is possible to offer a composite picture that a prospective operator investigating the field might find. The following figures are for a hypothetical case, but they give a fair coverage of the field:

It takes about 100 machines to get started comfortably, working spare time and not hiring any outside help. A 100-machine route can usually be serviced by one man working three evenings a week and one day on weekends, depending of course on the efficiency of the operator and quality of his locations. With really popular locations, a part-time operator might find himself working every evening and all of his weekends—at which point he would probably stop being a part-time operator. But until he has gotten his feet thoroughly wet and found he likes the business, most vending-machine companies strongly advise a man to keep his regular job for a while.

At a cost of \$100 apiece, the machines give a monthly net profit of about \$4 each with average locations. In addition to the initial \$10,000 purchase price required for a 100-machine route, there are supplies to buy and automobile expenses to consider, which might total another \$1000. A car is a necessity.

Some companies do not require all cash and will accept a deposit—say fifty per cent of the purchase price—with the balance to be paid out of profits. Others will let a man start out with some rebuilt machines for his less-desirable locations so that the initial investment is not quite so large.

All of which might make it appear that the vending-machine companies are not too eager to help men get

started; but this is not true. Obviously, the companies need more men using their machines so they can manufacture and sell more of them. But the companies insist, and justifiably so, that a man be in a position to be reasonably sure of making a success out of his venture. It is to the companies' own self-interest to see to it that a man succeeds, because when a man fails they suffer almost as much as he does, and if a company were not careful, it could wind up with an awful pile of used machines on its hands and nothing to do with them.

The number of machines quoted above does not apply to all types of vending machines, but they do give a good indication of the finances involved.

To obtain a more concrete idea of exactly what is involved in starting a route, we visited Howard E. Richardson, sandy-haired, scholarly-looking president of Juice Bar Sales Corp., 270 Madison Avenue, in New York's best business section. We told him that we were reporting on the vending-machine industry and wanted some facts. He gave us more than that—he showed us the facts right out of his company's books.

One of Mr. Richardson's products is the "Juice Bar," an automatic vender for four different selections of pure, chilled fruit and vegetable juices, and a chocolate drink, which is put up in six-ounce cans.



Milk machines sell both regular and chocolate, using two independent mechanisms.

"Suppose we wanted to buy ten of your machines. What would they cost?" was our first question.

"About \$10,000." A lean, ruddy-faced man with a curt, frank manner of speaking, he added: "But don't take ten machines. Take five."

"What do you mean? Don't you want to make money?"

"Yes. But we're more interested in building successful operators. This is a booming, baby industry and we're going to boom right along with it. We urge all our new operators to start off conservatively. Now, if you had some experience, that would be another matter."

"O.K., suppose we buy only five machines. Will you help us get locations for them?"

"No, but we know the men who will. They are 'location consultants,' experts at finding spots for vending-machine operators."

"Does that cost anything?"

"It won't cost you a cent until they find a location you like and approve. Then they'll arrange for your machines to be placed in the location. You'll pay them a flat fee of \$45 per machine, per location. In other words, your five machines, if located by a consultant, will cost you \$225."

"Mr. Richardson, do we need all cash to buy your machines? And how can we learn their proper operation?"

"You'll need about one-third cash as a down payment. You can take about 12 to 18 months to pay back the balance, on a conditional sales con-

tract at an interest rate of six per cent per annum. This debt will be handled by the Walter E. Heller Co., of Chicago and New York. They are the largest factors in the country for the automatic vending-machine industry."

"If you can come to our plant at Matawan, New Jersey, we'll give you a couple of days' training in care and handling of the machines. You'd have to be awfully dumb not to catch on fast. The machines are amazingly simple."

"What if we can't come to your plant?"

"That's all right. Even if you live in a small town, we can help. We have representatives in such key cities as Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Atlanta. They'll give you on-the-location training."

"What will our profit be?"

"Your net profit depends naturally on sales and the way you organize your business. All we'll tell you is that the gross profit is approximately fifty per cent."

"How are new operators making out?"

Mr. Richardson reached over to the corner of his neat all-steel desk and took a record off the top of a pile of papers. "Here's one," he announced, without looking up. "It's our file on 'John Smith.'" Naturally, Mr. Richardson, like most reputable businessmen, declined to disclose the name of a man with whom he does business.

The record showed that "John Smith" was a salesman in the textile business. His contacts brought him into many industrial plants. He took note of the vending-machine successes in other plants and decided to install a few of his own in a plant near a small town on the outskirts of New York. He bought three Juice Bars. Three weeks later he was back to buy two more. Each time he paid one-third cash down. Before the year was out he had bought nine more machines, making a total of fourteen. By the end of the next few months, he had the debt paid off on all the machines and was running into clear profits. He's still a textile salesman, but after a few more machines in a few more plants, he'll be in vending machines full time.

Of course, the vending-machine industry is so new that mistakes are being made all the time. Most industry spokesmen agree that many fatal errors are due to over-enthusiasm. Mr. Richardson, for example, was frank to admit that his own company had made a mistake recently when it allowed one of its salesmen to be talked into selling 20 Juice Bars to a 67-year-old retired widower. The old man was new to vending machines. Yet he insisted he could make a go of it with 20 machines, although he was urged to take fewer.

"But we did our best for him," Mr. Richardson recalls. "We helped him get some very fine locations in New Jersey. Then he found the trip



Milk-vending machines, left, are now installed in 70 New York apartment houses with 6,000 families to supply refrigerated milk at about 3¢ less than the home-delivered price. Right, machines serve coffee with or without cream and/or sugar.



from his home in Brooklyn too much by car. So we got him a helper, one of the best in the business. But the old man wouldn't trust the helper to collect the coins. All in all, the business was too much for him to handle; he was virtually forced to sell.

"He could have taken a terrific loss. But we managed to find him a good customer. The man who was his helper bought him out. Now the helper is the boss and he's well on the way to complete independence. He has almost all 20 machines paid off. We should never even have sold a single machine to the old man. We misjudged his enthusiasm for energy."

Actually, this points up an important word of caution. New vendors should stick close to home, according to location experts. The less traveling you have to do to take care of your machines, the better off you are.

OVER-ENTHUSIASM, however, is only one headache the new operator in vending machines has to contend with. There are others, far more serious. As in almost any other business, profession or trade in America today, the vending-machine industry has its hands full with slick operators, sharp promoters who are out to make a fast buck and who don't care whether you sink or swim. They'll try to sell you any and all machines in fantastic quantities. They sing high praises for vending machines, paint effortless futures loaded with quick riches, and try to get you to sign on the dotted line for as many machines as possible, even if you can afford only a small down payment. Why? The answer is simple. They'll never see you again. But once they turn in your contract to the manufacturer they represent, they get their commissions in full.

Most legitimate vending-machine representatives, however, are scrupulously honest and eager to bounce the sharp promoters from the business. One of these is youthful Robert L. Ferman, who at less than thirty years of age is president of Automatique, Inc., a company distributing and selling automatic vending machines for Wittenborgs of Denmark, one of the world's first and best-known automatic-machine makers.

We asked Mr. Ferman what he would advise the new operator to do. He came up with this ten-point checklist:

- (1) Before you buy a machine, check the manufacturer's Dun & Bradstreet rating.
- (2) Also check his status with such organizations as your local Chamber of Commerce and Better Business Bureau.
- (3) When an individual tells you that he represents a certain firm, check

his credentials and check with the firm to make sure that he does. He might take a down payment from you, and that would be the last you'd see of him.

(4) After he tells you the price of the machine you want to buy, shop around and check other manufacturers. Many small machines, for example, are being sold on the market today for \$100 each. The same ones can be bought from reputable manufacturers at \$14 or \$20 each. The difference may be the high commission you're paying to a salesman to travel around and find suckers.

(5) After he gets through telling you how good the machines are and how much profit they make, ask him to give you names of other operators in the vicinity. If he's reputable, he'll give you the names unhesitatingly. Then check with these people to see how they're making out and what their problems are.

(6) Check all figures over with an experienced bookkeeper or accountant. Remember, figures can be misleading to the untrained eyes.

(7) If someone secures a location for you, make sure of that location yourself so that you don't get thrown out the day after you move in.

(8) Make sure that supplies for the type of machine you buy will always be available.

(9) Don't sign any papers until you've taken them to an attorney. If anyone tries to give you a rush act, better back out. There's no hurry. Vending machines are here to stay.

(10) Above all, don't rush into business thinking that profits come in automatically. Unless you're prepared to do business in a business way, better stay out of vending machines.

This check-list looks like a formidable hurdle to get over. Of course, that depends on the individual. Even the kingpin of today's multi-million-dollar vending enterprises started out as a one-cylinder operation less than a generation ago. That's the spectacular story of the giant Rowe Corporation.

THE Rowe saga actually begins with the story of Robert Greene who, at the age of twelve, made up to \$50 a week by selling eggs from a decrepit wagon drawn by a blind horse. Two years after he got out of high school, Greene was selling time clocks; in a few years he had accumulated a \$15,000 bankroll. But trying to parlay this in other business ventures, he ran into bad luck and went broke. Then he headed for Los Angeles.

In a hotel lobby there, he saw his first cigarette-vending machine. It intrigued him. Not one to pass up a possibility, Greene located the in-

ventor-owner, William H. Rowe, and signed him to a coast-to-coast distribution sales contract. Then Greene hit the road.

The year was 1928. Ending up in New York, Greene ran up a fantastic bonanza. To the inventor back in California he sent \$187,500 and a report of sales exceeding 2,500 machines. Since that time the Rowe Corporation has sold more than 165,000 machines, from which they sell over 100,000,000 packages of cigarettes annually. Now president of the Rowe Corporation, with headquarters in New York, Mr. Greene recently estimated that final sales tallies for the 1952 operations of his firm should hit a record \$37,000,000!

YOU'VE probably never heard of Herman K. Hart. But no doubt you remember the Pierce Arrow Company. Hart was that company's treasurer. When Pierce Arrow finally broke up, Hart could have had his pick of any of a dozen lucrative jobs. Instead, he took one look at vending machines and decided he was going to invest. He put \$10,000 into making gum-balls for those now-famous penny gum-ball vending machines. A few years later he sold his share of the gum-ball company for \$140,000!

In 1950, he formed the H. K. Hart Confections, Inc. He had exactly three employees to start with. Today, the Hart firm has 60 employees and their gum-ball sales are running high into the seven-figure brackets. Many of his customers are vending-machine operators whom he himself put in business.

But the new pioneers in vending machines today are the operators. They have nothing to do with the designing or manufacturing of new machines. They simply lease the machines or buy them outright, then place them in spots where they are likely to earn money. According to authoritative estimates, there are now about 6,000 small-scale operators in the entire country, with dozens jumping into the grass-roots movement every week. They lease or buy machines at prices ranging from \$15 (for a small chewing-gum venter) to \$2,000 and \$2,500 for machines that dispense ham sandwiches cooked internally by radar in fifteen seconds.

Some operators are concentrating their efforts in the big cities. But many—mindful of the fact that a car can take a man outside a big city in a matter of minutes—have begun invading the smaller and medium-size towns.

D. C. Moore of Rockford, Illinois, is one of these.

Not long ago, he started out on a small scale. Today, he has some 500 machines. How is he making out?

"I've got thirty-four machines in the W. F. & John Barnes Co., near Rockford," Moore said to us. "Barnes makes hydraulic equipment and machine tools, employs about 800 people. I've got coffee, soft-drink, gum, candy and peanut machines in Barnes—all nickel machines—and some cigarette machines.

"Those workers sure can drink coffee! We have to fill the coffee machines twice a day. They'll drink about 1,200 cups in an average day, compared with about 700 cold drinks and they'll eat as many as 600 candy bars a day.

"It's a good deal for me, and for Barnes, too. The company gets a commission on gross sales which goes into its athletic fund to help sponsor dances, basketball games and stuff like that. I'd say that the fund gets about \$175 a month off those machines." (And that \$175 represents only the commissions, a percentage of Moore's gross take.)

Actually, there's nothing new about vending machines. We know that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were vending-machine patrons in the 1700's, when they used to stop in at the old Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg, Virginia. There they would drop a coin into a brass tobacco box. A hinged lid was released by the coin. The device was called the "Honor Box," since customers were honor-bound not to take more than one pipeful for each coin deposited.

Perhaps the strangest vending machine on record appeared in the old Territory of Utah. Back in the Wild West days a married couple in the Territory could obtain a divorce without grounds or without even turning up in court. All each had to do was sign duplicate papers. Such a simple procedure could not bring much of a fee for lawyers and they shied away from handling that kind of legal business. But some of it was unavoidable. It remained finally for the shrewd law firm of Johnson and Underdunk, in the town of Corinne, to find an answer. They prepared the necessary divorce papers by the hundreds and placed them in a primitive-looking machine. It was the first full-fledged forerunner of modern vending machines. When a bickering pair deposited their \$2.50 in silver coins, the divorce papers came sliding out.

Through the years, however, an irritating aspect of vending-machine operations developed. Some customers began to cheat the machines by using such things as slugs, hairpins, safety pins, tokens and a dozen varieties of bogus coins. Machines were kicked, punched, wrestled with and generally battered by drunks or irate patrons who happened to lose a coin.

Today's robots are virtually assault- and cheat-proof. The slug rejector is now standard equipment for vendors, and it would take a genius to get a slug or other phony coin past a modern vending machine. The slug

rejector weighs, measures and probes the coin from every conceivable angle. No good? The coin drops out. Some rejectors are so touchy they even reject legitimate coins that aren't quite perfect in weight or shape. Some manufacturers even have testing crews who do nothing but batter and beat a vending machine until every possible defect in its design is uncovered.

Yet even now we are still behind some European nations in the use of automatic venders. Many modern supermarkets in Europe sport machines which dispense canned meats, fruits, vegetables and a wide variety of groceries. An Australian-made "Electrical Merchant" (which soon became "Elmer") dispenses twenty-five different products and can take payment for items in any combination of coins up to \$1.99.

But Americans are beginning to spread out fast. In Cleveland, recently, the Valetaria went on the market. This automatic machine acts like a robot valet, accepts your clothing on a hanger and, believe it or not, asks you what you want done—"cleaning or just pressing, please?"—via direct connection, of course, to a central operator. You return later in the day to find a freshly cleaned and pressed suit of clothes handled according to your instructions. The robot machine takes your money, makes change, refuses incorrect deposits and opens and shuts its doors automatically. "Talking-valet" venders have already gone into an aviation plant and a garage in the Midwest, for trial runs.

But largely the big-profit parade in vending machines is made up of a lot of small-town Americans who operate somewhat less spectacular robots. Typical of these is Jack McNeill, who lives in a small town near Kansas City. After a hitch in the Army and a stretch in Korea, Jack arranged for a \$4,000 GI loan. He went out and contracted to buy a few candy-vending machines. He set up a route in bars, lunchrooms, motels and roadside diners on the highway leading from his town into Kansas City.

Most of his money in his first six months of operation, which ended in January, 1953, went for paying off the debt on his machines. A few months from now, he expects to own the machines outright—100 of them. Already, he has his brother working for him. However, don't get the idea that Jack has become rich. He hasn't.

"But I'm making a very comfortable living," he points out smilingly, "and that's all I really want, at least for now. After all, I'm only twenty-four years old."

He adds, "By the way, there's one other important thing. I'm an independent businessman. How's that, at twenty-four? I like it very much!" •



"No, you wan't—I will administer."

It was the beginning of a new era in boxing. Now even the manager was beginning to hear little bells that weren't there.

■ By JOHN NOVOTNY

"BENNY, ARE YOU SURE we don't go to the well too often lately?"

Tim Richards knew his man enjoyed fighting, but Benny had taken a lot of punishment in his last two bouts. The balding fighter grinned a good-natured, crooked little grin, hopped off the rubbing-table, and placed a huge sweaty paw on his manager's shoulder.

"You're working too hard, Tim," he said. "Your talk don't make sense no more. Maybe you should take it easy. The only well I know is at the lake and we don't train there since the Simmons match."

"I mean we fight too often, Benny. You don't have time to recover from those head shots. Pretty soon you'll hear bells; then—"

"I don't hear bells, Tim," Benny protested. "Only in the ring. He didn't hurt me much tonight."

"Okay, Benny. Get your shower, you big lug. You want to smell good for your birthday party at Clare's. I'm going up and catch the lightweight."

"Thirty, Tim. Thirty ain't old."

"Long as you don't hear bells, it's not."

Tim Richards closed the dressing-room door behind him and Benny sat on the rubbing-table swinging his feet happily.

"Sure, I hear bells," Benny mused. "A guy don't hear bells, he's deaf! So maybe I hear a

CECIL and BENNY



Illustrated by FRANK LACANO

little extra one every so often. But faint—very faint. I—

"Happy birthday."

The soft, shy voice startled the fighter. He stopped swinging his feet and frowned.

"At least it ain't bells," he whispered. The small gray mouse sat up near the end of the rubbing-table and tried again.

"Happy birthday, Benny."

"Well—thanks," Benny said, staring. "But mouses don't talk."

The rodent shrugged skinny little shoulders.

"I didn't know."

"Of course, it's okay with me," Benny said in a friendly tone. "I ain't one to have any prejudices or things like that."

"I'm glad to hear that," the mouse said quickly. Both of them were silent for a few seconds.

"My name's Cecil," the mouse offered.

"I bet you ain't happy about that," Benny smiled.

"You get used to it. By the way, Benny, I'm sorry that you got beaten on your birthday." Cecil's eyes were watery.

"Aw, don't even think of it," Benny said. "All in a day's work. You see the fight?"

Cecil nodded.

"I have a tunnel to the roof. Then I go down the microphone cord and watch from there. I like it when they pull it up and down."

"You see all the fights?" Benny asked.

"Yes," Cecil responded warmly. "In fact, I saw you a few weeks ago against Coughlin."

Benny grinned crookedly again.

"I hope you didn't bet on me in that one. But did you see me take Crane before that?"

"I certainly did," Cecil approved, clapping his front paws. "You were very good."

"I thought so too," the fighter said. "And—"

He stopped as Tim Richards' voice came down the outside corridor:

"The little guy looks good, but wait until he meets—"

"You better not be here when Tim comes in," Benny whispered.

But Cecil was already heading for his hole in the wall.

"See you again, Benny," he tossed over one skinny shoulder. Benny waved. At that moment, Tim Richards came into the dressing-room. He waved back to Benny, then stopped.

"Now we wave to each other?"

"It seemed like a nice thing to do," Benny said defensively.

"How come you don't shower yet?" Tim demanded.

"I been thinking," Benny answered.

Tim narrowed his eyes, studying his fighter.

"About them bells, Benny—"

"I told you, Tim, no bells."

During his shower, Benny considered telling Tim about Cecil. He decided against the idea.

Tim's voice penetrated the spray of water. "The fifteenth of next month you fight Sorrentino. What do you say I call it off, Benny?"

The fighter's head was poked out of the shower, a few stray hairs plastered over the bare temples.

"What business are we in, Tim?"

Tim gestured in resignation.

"Okay," Benny said. "So let's do all the business we can."

On the evening of the Sorrentino fight, Benny insisted on arriving at the dressing-room early.

"I think I'll take a nap to relax," he explained.

"You've never been nervous in your life," Tim laughed. "You are completely relaxed. Okay—fall apart if you want. I'll be up in the office for awhile."

He left and Benny looked down at the small hole in the wall.

"Cecil!" he called gently. Almost immediately the small head appeared.

"I've been waiting," Cecil said. "I have news."

"Nothing's wrong?" Benny asked.

Cecil shook his head. "I watched Mr. Sorrentino train," he announced. "But he trains uptown," Benny exclaimed.

Cecil nodded unhappily.

"I know. I took the subway and it was crowded. Feet all over the place. When I wanted to get off, one big slob was standing on my tail. Two extra stations I had to go, then upstairs, across the platform, and back down."

"Cecil, never do that again," the fighter ordered gruffly. "You can get killed on them subways!"

Cecil relaxed near Benny's elbow as the fighter leaned on the table.

"If you think you made a friendship with a smart mouse, I guess you're going to be disappointed," he said.

"I ain't no brain myself," Benny laughed. "But you don't seem dumb."

"I was in a research lab for a while," Cecil confessed. "They had an affair with lots of passages in it. Most alleys were dead ends. One route led to the food. I nearly starved. So I escaped."

"You never got to the food?"

"Not once. And it was Swiss."

Benny nodded sympathetically. "A brain gave me a test once. When I take his report home, my babe Clare gets out a dictionary. Next day I went back and slugged the guy. It cost me a grand to square the deal, and I guess we're both dumb."

"Getting back to Sorrentino," Cecil said. "You can beat him. The guys he trains against always beat him until his manager makes them stop."

"How?"

"His left hand is slow. Each time he leads with a left, you clout him with a right."

"Tim says I should jab with my left," Benny said.

"It will be easier my way," Cecil answered. "This Sorrentino limps a little on his right leg. That's because his right leg is worn down from him being knocked over that way so often. And with big gloves, too."

"I'll try it," Benny agreed suddenly. "If you can take the subway to help me, I can try hitting Sorrentino with a right."

Before the bell for the first round, Tim gave Benny his instructions.

"Keep that left in his face, Benny. That way he doesn't get in close. Jab him. Then cross the old right when you see an opening. Go get him."

The two fighters met in the center of the ring and moved around each other cautiously. Sorrentino tried a conventional left lead and Benny's big right fist came looping from nowhere and bounced off Sorrentino's mouth. The fighter staggered back and the crowd roared at the suddenness of the action. Benny was delighted; he waited impatiently and when his opponent pushed the left out again, Benny crashed a right to the jaw. Sorrentino went into the ropes and came off them grabbing for Benny's arms. Benny tagged him once more before the round ended.

At the beginning of the second, Sorrentino tried to rush Benny and got his nose pushed in for his efforts. A few moments later, he landed on the seat of his pants and began to wonder why his stupid manager had booked this fight. It ended at two minutes and twelve seconds of the second round. At the count of ten, Sorrentino was getting ready to crawl to his corner and Benny was standing happily in a neutral corner, staring up past the lights trying to see Cecil on the microphone cord.

Tim grabbed him and hugged him. "Hey, slugger!" the manager yelled joyously. "You're even better now that you're thirty. We're on the comeback trail."

Benny grinned, mussed Tim's hair, and walked over to Sorrentino's corner to shake his hand and ask how he felt. While Benny got ready to shower, Tim dashed up to the promoter's office. Cecil practically skipped out of his hole to greet Benny.

Benny won six more fights and then Tim got him matched with Matty Phillips, the number one heavyweight contender. Matty was young

and popular. He won all his fights by knockouts before the fourth round—and he trained out of town.

It was dark when Benny stopped his old station wagon on the dirt road running past Matty Phillips' training camp. Cecil poked his head out of Benny's coat pocket and twitched his whiskers.

"There are animals around here," he announced nervously.

"That's the stuff Matty puts on his hair," Benny said. "It stinks."

"It's dark," Cecil protested.

"Mouses like the dark," Benny said.

"I think it's going to rain," the mouse said, drawing back into the safety-of-the-pocket.

"The stars are out. Now look, Cecil, you said you'd do it, but if you want to back out—"

"Oh, no," Cecil said miserably. "I'll do it; wouldn't think of anything else."

"Okay. All you do is follow the path about a hundred feet and you'll come to the main house. Get inside, find a place to stay, and tomorrow start your observations. I'll pick you up here one week from tonight."

"I'd even rather take the subway," Cecil mumbled.

"Now, listen—"

"I'm not complaining. Suppose I miss the house?"

Benny shrugged.

"So sleep outdoors for the night."

"I'm not a field mouse. I'm a house mouse," Cecil said indignantly.

"It's a thousand times bigger than you. You can't miss it," Benny encouraged him.

The mouse began to walk away from the station wagon, then stopped and looked over his shoulder. Benny waved.

"One week from tonight," he repeated.

Cecil choked back a sob and crept off into the darkness. Benny waited a few minutes, then turned the station wagon around and headed home.

A week later he returned; Cecil was waiting for him.

"They had a cat," he announced.

"I'm sorry," Benny told him. "But you're here, so I guess you made out okay."

"A damned large, dirty cat," Cecil asserted.

"You picked up some bad language here," the fighter said reprovingly.

"And some muscles," the mouse retorted. "My wind is better too. I did as much running as observing."

"But you found the house?"

"Certainly," Cecil said. "Did you doubt that I would?"

"I almost decided to come back and look through the woods for you."

They climbed into the station wagon and headed back. Cecil lay on his

back on the smooth top of the dashboard.

"Matty Phillips thinks you're a pushover," the mouse said.

"How come?"

"He says you're too old and he'll knock you out inside three rounds. So he hardly trained at all. His manager was furious."

"What do I do?" Benny asked.

"Same as I did with the cat," Cecil said. "You run. And you keep running until Matty Phillips wears himself out."

"Are you sure he'll wear out?"

"We had champagne," Cecil said importantly.

"We?" Benny asked.

"Matty threw a party one evening when his manager went into town. They had champagne and a lot was left in the glasses. I liked it."

"You shouldn't drink alcohol when a cat is around," Benny scolded.

"I bit him on the ear while he was asleep," Cecil said. "Then I ran."

"You shouldn't have done it."

Cecil leaned back and dreamed reminiscently while Benny drove.

MATTY PHILLIPS broke from his corner like a race-horse and Benny hurried to get out of his way. Matty chased him. Benny stopped running every so often and permitted Matty to shower lefts and rights on his elbows, gloves, and shoulders. He arranged it so that they were tied up in his own corner at the bell. Matty skipped across the ring.

As the round ended, Tim frowned. "Suddenly you're a turtle, ch?" he asked incredulously. "I don't see you throw a punch the whole round. What happens to the dynamite right that flattens Sorrentino and the others?"

"We got this all figured," Benny grinned.

"We do?" Tim said. "I'm happy to hear it. Otherwise I'd sure never know."

The second round was a duplicate of the first, and the crowd began to stamp its feet. They ended in Benny's corner again and Matty walked jauntily across the ring. At the end of the third, he just walked. During the last seconds of the fourth, Matty Phillips won a psychological victory by fighting furiously and ending the round in his corner. He sneered as he sank gratefully onto his stool and watched Benny plod over to the waiting Tim Richards.

In the fifth, the crowd began to boo, so Benny opened up a little and threw a few punches. Matty's wallopers were losing their sting as they thudded against his arms. By the eighth, Matty's seconds had to help him to his corner and in the tenth, Benny let loose. He knocked Matty

right across the ring, then caught him bouncing off the ropes.

"That's for leaving champagne around for my friend, Cecil."

Crack!

"And that's for your lousy cat."

Matty was game and got up from the canvas once. Benny nearly tore his head off with a whistling well-rested right hand, so the second time Matty wisely, decided to stay down. He didn't even bother listening to the count. Benny waved happily up toward the dimness above the glaring ring lights and Cecil almost fell off the mike cord as he swung around by his tail.

When the reporters were gone, Tim hung onto Benny and laughed tiredly and happily.

"Even if we go no further, tonight is some night. It is a beautiful fight, Benny; you are terrific. And we get forty percent of the take. We're rich. And the champ is next. How does it happen, Benny?"

"Who knows, Tim? Go talk to the newspaper fellows. Maybe they'll tell you. And ask Clare to come down."

Tim shook his fighter's hand and dashed out to catch the reporters. Benny looked toward the hole.

"Cecil, I've got a surprise for you. Come out."

The small gray mouse came out and looked around.

"What is it?"

"I want you to meet someone. Go into your hole and then come out when I call. Okay?"

"Okay," Cecil agreed expansively. He backed out of sight.

CLARE arrived a minute later. She was blonde and almost as big as Benny. The ornament on her big leather handbag was heavy enough to lay out any masher. She grabbed the fighter, bent him back over the rubbing-table, and kissed him.

"You were great, sweetheart!" she said. "Like a champ. For a few rounds, I thought you were going to loose up the joint. But what a finish! Man!"

Benny managed to stand up.

"Clare, honey, I got a friend I want you to meet. He helped me win tonight and my other fights too. Nobody else knows about him, but I want you to see him."

"Drag him in, Benny. I'm always happy to meet a brain."

"Well, he ain't exactly a brain. It's just—well, you can see for yourself. Cecil!"

The mouse jauntily trotted out of his hole. Clare gazed expectantly at the dressing-room door, looked around the small room, and then spotted Cecil.

"This is—" But Benny never finished the introduction. Clare's hand

darted into the big handbag and came out with a king-size forty-five revolver.

Bam! Bam!

With her eyes shut and an occasional scream tossed in to help rattle the doors, she blasted the floor in every direction.

Cecil appeared to be no more than a gray streak going into the hole in the wall and Benny ended up in the shower-room. When Clare ran out of ammunition, she dashed for the nearest door.

"There's a damned mouse in here, Benny," she called back. "I'll meet your friend some other time."

THE door slammed and Benny cautiously came out of the shower. Clare's voice, speaking to someone else, drifted in from the hall.

"Nah, I was taking a few cracks at a lousy mouse! Nothing's wrong."

Their footsteps moved away. Benny failed to find a mouse corpse and his spirits rose.

"Cecil," he called softly. He knelt down close to the hole. "Cecil!"

Very cautiously, the point of Cecil's nose came out into the light.

"Is it safe?"

"She's gone. I'm sorry, Cecil! If I knew she—"

He stopped in horror as the little mouse wobbled unsteadily out of the hole.

"She got you," Benny sobbed. "She got you!"

Tenderly, he lifted Cecil up onto the table.

"No," Cecil said, one paw massaging a nasty bump on top of his head. "She missed me but I couldn't stop when I went through the hole. Ran smack into a two-by-four in the wall."

"Thank goodness," Benny sighed. "Wait, I'll get the liniment."

He poured a little on a handkerchief and applied it to the bump.

"Easy," warned Cecil. "Easy."

"I am."

"Don't rub. Just pat."

"Okay. There."

"I don't think she liked me."

"Aw, she didn't stop to think," Benny replied, embarrassed. "Clare ain't a bad kid."

"Fortunately, she is a bad shot," Cecil observed.

"Look, let's forget about Clare. I've got something for you," Benny told him. The fighter unwrapped a big package and placed the wooden affair on the floor near Cecil's home.

"It's a maze," Benny said. "So you can practice."

"I wonder—" Cecil mused. He trotted around the wooden puzzle and found the entrance near his hole in the wall. Taking a deep breath, he plunged in. Benny rescued him from the very first dead-end passage, held him up for a bird's-eye view, and placed him at the start again. Cecil got past the first dead end this time but became hopelessly lost in the second one.

"It'll take time," Benny said.

"I'll keep trying," Cecil promised.

AND he did keep trying but by the night of the big fight, he had not yet solved the maze. Of course, he had spent a week away from the puzzle. After Benny signed to fight Sandy Schmitt for the heavyweight championship, Cecil spent a week at the champ's training quarters. On the night of the fight, Benny arrived early as usual and they went over tactics.

"They're figuring on you for a hard slugging fight," Cecil said. "Sandy trained a lot and is in good shape. We can't outwait him."

"So we box him," Benny added, having been so instructed when Cecil first returned from Schmitt's camp.

"That's right," the mouse said. "But don't forget to punch. Box,



The mouse trotted jauntily out of his hole. Clare gazed expectantly around the dressing-room, then spotted Cecil. "This is—" But Benny never finished the introduction. Clare's hand darted into the big handbag and came out with a king-size forty-five revolver. *Bam! Bam!*

faint, dance around; then the old one-two."

"But we don't follow up?"

"No. Not in the early rounds. After the fourth, if you land a good one-two and you see he's in trouble, then you follow up. But be careful."

"Okay," Benny agreed. "Now how are you making out?"

The mouse looked disgusted.

"I haven't made it yet."

"Get by the first two wrong turns?"

"Yes," Cecil said. "But then I lose my way in the third or fourth. And, when I'm in that deep, sometimes I have trouble finding my way back out."

"I think Tim's coming back," Benny warned. "I'll see you after the fight, Cecil!"

"Good luck," Cecil said. He sneered at the intricate wooden construction as he went into the wall. . . .

The first round was about even as the two well-conditioned fighters felt each other out. Benny jabbed with a rapier left and his legs felt young and springy. Sandy Schmitt looked like a smooth working machine as he began his seventh defense of his heavyweight title. But in the second round, Benny shook up the champ with hard lefts and rights, following a series of left jabs. Schmitt came back with a stinging left hook to the head, but missed a right as Benny ducked. The crowd roared its delight and Benny smiled.

"You're looking good," Tim told him. "Keep after him."

In the third, Benny's left reddened Sandy's nose and the champ's mad return flurry bounced harmlessly off Benny's elbows as he danced lightly away from the ropes. Again the crowd applauded. In the fourth and fifth, Benny's footwork became more intricate and his feints made the champ look awkward as wild rights slid over Benny's head and by his shoulders. Benny was delighted.

"He don't touch you," Tim said; "but do you forget about punching too?"

"It's under control," the fighter grinned. "Listen to that mob. They love it."

THE sixth opened fast with a furious champion backing Benny into a corner and flailing away with both hands. Benny held his elbows in close, bobbed, weaved and ducked. He got away without being hit with a solid blow. Later, he stood flatfooted in center ring and permitted Schmitt to throw leather for all he was worth. Often the champ was wide open after a wild swing but Benny got up on his toes and danced just out of range. He was enjoying this more than any other fight he could remember and the crowd helped him along.

"Benny, the Master Boxer," he hummed, pulling his chin back from a wicked hook. "Scientist and artist of the ring," he thought, picking off a right with his arm and grinning at Sandy Schmitt as they clinched.

In the seventh, he tagged the champion with a good left hook and crossed a right that jarred the other man. In the eighth, the roof fell in. Benny ducked a left lead and straightened up in time to meet Schmitt's right. It was the first decent shot Sandy Schmitt landed in the whole fight, and it was the last. Benny's smile was still on his face at the count of ten but Benny was flat on his back. He woke up as his seconds were helping him along the dirty buff corridor to the dressing-room. Tim and the boys spent a half hour working on him.

"He lands a lucky blow," Tim mourned when they were alone. "You have him wrapped up. Well, you'll take him in the return match. I'll go easy and pick up our purse. Take it easy until I get back."

"Okay," mumbled Benny.

"By the way, Clare complains there is a mouse in here, so I set a trap back by the wooden thing over there. Empty it if there's anything in it, will you?"

He closed the door as Benny sat up, his heart beating wildly.

"A trap? Cecil!"

He jumped off the table and lunged across to the hole in the wall.

"Cecil! Cecil!"

There was a moment of silence, then an ashamed and unhappy voice answered him.

"Over here."

Benny looked around and saw an old cage-type trap at the exit of the maze. Cecil clung to the bars.

"At the exit?" Benny wondered.

"That should have been the safest place."

"I know," Cecil lamented. "But I finally got all the way through. When I grabbed the cheese, the gate slammed shut. You don't look so good yourself."

"I lost," Benny confessed.

"I didn't see the fight," Cecil said, "—for obvious reasons."

Benny lifted the cage and opened the gate, permitting the mouse to walk out onto his hand.

"We both got smart at the same time," the fighter said. "Too smart! I remembered to box—and liked it so well I forgot to punch."

"I figured out the puzzle and then had to grab the cheese," Cecil said.

They sat silently and considered the errors of their ways.

"Maybe with mouses and men, some just ain't meant to be smart," Benny said philosophically. "Anyway, I made my bundle."

"And you can make more on the return bout," the mouse responded consolingly.

Benny looked at him.

"I ain't smart but I ain't that dumb," he retorted, fingering his jaw. "One punch! No, Cecil, I'm retiring from the ring for good."

"I'm glad."

"We'll live in the little house I have over on Staten Island."

"We?" Cecil asked.

"Sure. You and me and—"

"Not Clare, Benny!" Cecil pleaded. Benny shivered. "No. Since I seen the cannon she carries, the charm is gone. But she ain't the only babe I know. Alice, you'd like."

"Alice?"

"A little doll. Quiet. Likes to read. Dances in the chorus of a club in Jersey. Been dancing there ten years. She's been dying to get out."

"But will she marry you?" Cecil asked.

Benny laughed.

"She already asked me four times."

Benny was dressed when Tim came back and handed him a fat check.

The chain of wedlock is so heavy that it takes two to carry it—sometimes three.

—Alexander Dumas

Cecil was lodged in the ex-fighter's jacket, ready to travel. The mouse carried with him a tiny bell from a charm bracelet that he had found and treasured.

"I'm retiring, Tim," Benny said.

"It figures," Tim smiled, shaking his hand. "Before you start hearing—"

He stiffened as Cecil shook the tiny charm in the depths of Benny's pocket.

"What's that?"

"I don't hear nothing," Benny said. Cecil planted his feet against the lining and tolled the little bell with all his might.

"—before you start hearing bells," the white-faced manager repeated weakly. "I think I'll sit here and rest for a moment."

He sank down on a wooden chair as Benny moved to the door.

"Drop in at my place in Staten Island, Tim. Alice would like to have you. So long."

Tim Richards blinked. The little bell tolled away. Outside in the hall, Benny patted Cecil gently.

"Okay. He's been paid back for the trap."

"The cheese wasn't so hot either," Cecil complained.

Benny laughed and walked out into the night.



RELIC

It was Clem's prized possession,
the skull of an Indian who'd died years before.

But Clem finally was to admit that the
mantelpiece wasn't the proper place to keep it.

By ANN GIBBONS



A BLUEBOOK SHORT-SHORT COMPLETE ON THESE 2 PAGES

HE BROUGHT THE SKULL home and put it on the mantel, between the clock and the vase of gilded cat-tails. When his mother saw it she cried out in alarm and vexation, and ordered him to come and get this horrid thing and throw it away. She was not moved by the fact that the skull had become Clem's dearest, most-prized possession from the moment he found it in the dark ravine; after all, how many boys in Butler's Cross, or anywhere else in the world, had ever found a human skull?

It was only when he argued that it was an Indian relic, and possibly valuable, that she said he might keep it; but he'd have to put it away, out of sight. So he took it to his room and set it on the bureau with the cracked marble top, and he polished it every day with an old silk handkerchief of his father's. It took on a fine luster and the perfect teeth grinned cheerfully even at night, in the darkness. It was a pity his mother could not feel about the Indian skull, and Butler's Cross, the way he did.

Clem and his father had liked the Ozarks and Butler's Cross, right from the beginning, and they felt at home there; but his mother was a city woman who had liked Chicago and their rooms beneath the tracks of the Elevated, the noise and the smell of hot tar and frying onions. She had not

been able to adjust herself to mosquitoes and rattlers, outdoor privies, and the wells that ran dry in summer. Least of all could she learn to like or understand the people, and they didn't like her any better than she liked them. Notional, they called her, and stuck up—a cold woman who nagged Ross Baggott for going to square dances and playing quoits on summer evenings. It had been a mistake, bringing her back to his native hills.

When Ross ran away with Lyddy Barcom, who worked at the Elite Café and had soft light hair that curled at her neck on hot days like little duck-feathers, and small boneless hands that clung when they touched you, and sweet high laughter, people in Butler's Cross said that it served Clem's mother right.

Clem's mother hadn't known Lyddy Barcom, nor heard the talk about Lyddy and Ross Baggott; it was doubtful if she even knew that Lyddy had gone away, too, on that summer night when Ross just took up and left without a word. Clem knew, because he'd been told at school and had tried to whip the boy who told him; but how could you tell your mother a thing like that? She had spoken to Clem of his father just once, and that with surprising forbearance.

"I shouldn't have rode him like I

did," she said. "I shouldn't have kept hounding him to go back to the city. You can push a man beyond his endurance, and I should have known it. Your father's a good man at heart, Clem. He'll come back to us."

No one spoke of Ross Baggott and Lyddy Barcom any more; probably no one thought about them any more, except Clem and his mother.

Instead, life—the life of little boys growing up, and going fishing, and catching toads, and teasing girls, and going on hikes—went on as before in Butler's Cross. It was on one of Clem's hikes to the ravine that he'd found the skull.

The ravine was at the base of a cliff called the Leap, and the legend was the same as it is with all such natural formations—that it had been used by Indian lovers, centuries ago, to end their unhappy alliances in the sweet release of a leap to death. According to the children of Butler's Cross, the ravine beneath the cliff was a treasure-trove of Indian relics, if one but dared climb down to it.

But Clem had to climb down, if for no other reason than to prove to the other kids later that he'd gone there alone. So he made his way with difficulty down the steep side of the rock, and eventually landed in the ravine, where he splashed his sweating face and neck with cold water from the stream. It was dim and dark in the ravine, and Clem wanted suddenly to be up and out of there. But he



had to make at least a quick search for an Indian arrow, or maybe one of those stone skinning-knives, something to prove he'd been there. Almost at once, covered by dead leaves so that he'd have missed it if he hadn't kicked against it with his shoe, he found the skull.

He'd never seen a skull before, but there was nothing about this one that repelled or horrified him. It was clean and smooth and, as the moisture had dried out of it, so white. He tied it in his shirt, climbed out of the ravine, and took it home; and, when he got there, his mother whipped him for being out so late and missing school, although he was now twelve years old.

EVENTUALLY he was persuaded to tell a chosen few where he'd found the skull, and to organize an expedition to the ravine to find what must still lie there: the rest of the skeleton. They might, Ted Bricker pointed out, even find a lot more skulls. Who knew how many lovers might have jumped from the cliff through the years?

There had been rain on the morning of the expedition, and when they reached the cliff the ravine was thick with fog. Art Bedell leaned over to look into the veiled depths.

"Fellow could fall off here mighty easy," he said, sounding as if he wished he hadn't come.

Lee Geddes pitched his apple-core into the mist and pretended to teeter uncertainly on the brink.

"Yoo-hoo, I'm falling!" he said, screeching like a girl. "Catch me, lover, I'm going to jump!"

"We better get started," Ted told them. "Lee, you pay out the rope slow and easy. I'm the oldest; I better go first."

They hadn't searched long when they found their skeleton; it lay near the foot of the cliff, covered thinly with leaves. It wasn't a neat, well-assembled skeleton, for it had been tossed and scattered about by lynx and bobcat, and it wasn't until Ted picked up another skull that they knew what they had found.

It was near the skull Ted found that they saw a woman's shoe, or what was left of it, and it set them even more excitedly to digging and searching among the vines and dead leaves. But it was Clem who discovered the real prize, something that gleamed dully through the wet grass. He scraped the earth away from it with his thumbnail, and saw it was a gold pocket-watch, the grime and tarnish almost obscuring the figured carving on its case.

"Gee," Lee Geddes said, "d'ya suppose it's a real Indian watch?"

He peered curiously at the watch, over Clem's shoulder.

"Indians didn't have watches, you dope!" Ted Bricker scoffed.

They found nothing more except debris—bits of old cloth, a rusted

buckle from a belt, a button or two—and eventually they wrapped their Indian treasures in the tow sack they'd brought, and climbed out of the ravine. All except the watch; that was Clem's own find, and he kept that to himself, in his pants pocket.

AGAIN it was late, well past the supper hour, when Clem reached home, and his mother dozed in her rocker, a fresh-cut switch to whip Clem lying on the floor beside her. Clem went to his room without waking her, and got the skull from the bureau top and wrapped it in the silk handkerchief. Then he put it in the green-metal toolbox his father had given him for Christmas, when he'd been nine.

In the watery moonlight, he went outside and buried the box in a corner of the yard, where myrtle grew thickly. Before putting the box in the ground, though, he took the watch from his pocket, pried open the back, and saw again, faintly in the dim light from the back porch, the familiar tracing of oak leaves and acorns, and his father's name engraved in the center. He put the watch next to the skull, closed the box and buried it.

He washed with cold water and yellow soap in the basin on the back porch, and went in to eat his supper. But first he stole to his mother's side, picked up the new switch she'd cut, and broke it into little pieces and threw them into the fire. *

Illustrated by TOM EDWARDS



Captain Streeter VS the City of Chicago

By HORACE BAILEY BROWN

Legend says you can't fight City Hall,
but Captain Streeter fought Chicago to
a standstill in a battle that is still going
on, with billions of dollars at stake.

■ Who says you can't fight City Hall!

Captain George Wellington Streeter did. Not only that, he carried his private war to the State of Illinois and the Federal Government in Washington. For 30 years the swashbuckling old pirate gave them unmitigated hell. He fought the Chicago police with clubs, pitchforks, boiling water and guns. He thumbed his nose at the Mayor and chief of police. He defied the Governor, daring him to call out the militia to put down his "insurrection." He battled





with guile an awesome array of multimillionaire landowners and their attorneys, administering humiliating defeats at every encounter.

During the long and bloody siege of his "billion-dollar dump," three men were killed outright, a dozen died of injuries and scores nursed wounds from bludgeons, axes, scalds and birdshot.

Only old age and death eliminated this unconquerable fighter from the "Streeterville War" and brought an end to the bloodshed. Even then his heirs picked up the torch and carried the crusade to the courts where today, 65 years later, they still seek legal possession of the fabulously rich Gold Coast, whose land value is estimated at more than a billion dollars.

CAPTAIN STREETER came to Chicago under circumstances foreshadowing the turbulent years to follow. Lake Michigan, in one of her nastier moods, tossed him out of a stormy sea onto a stormier beach. There was this difference: The gigantic lake combers quieted after awhile. The Captain's beach never did. In fact, it experienced even more violence as time passed.

The Captain had bought himself a small steamer to use running guns to warring Central American states. He planned to give her a trial some blustery day on Lake Michigan. If she stood that battering, she would be fit for service in the Gulf of Mexico. He named her the *Reutan*.

On July 10th, 1886, the lake was whipped into a raging maelstrom by a nor'west gale. She was boiling as she hadn't boiled before in months. It

was late afternoon. Captain Streeter, wrapped in a slicker, stood in the lee of his wheelhouse and nodded grimly. "This is what I been waiting for, Maria," he announced to his wife. "We'll shove off and see if she holds together."

An hour later the *Reutan*, with the Captain at the helm and Maria as a typical "Steamboat Annie" handling the lines, plus a "crew" of one man signed on as an engineer, chugged away from her mooring in Milwaukee harbor and plowed past the breakwater into the tempestuous seas.

For awhile she heaved and rolled through the mountainous waves. Three miles off the breakwater, the Captain had had enough and tried to come about to return to port. But the gale had increased in fury, and the *Reutan* couldn't make it. Even more alarming than the failure of her ancient boiler to keep up steam pressure, her seams were opening and she was beginning to take water dangerously. The return to Milwaukee harbor being impossible, there was no alternative but to turn her stern to the wind and run for it.

With her old engine barely turning up steerage-way and Streeter holding her in a quivering wind, the *Reutan* steadied somewhat and stopped leaking, even though she creaked and groaned ominously at every plunge across one white-capped comber and down the side of another into green water in the trough. Yet every time the Captain attempted to bring her into the teeth of the gale to head for shelter, she shuddered and pitched as though the next moment might be her last.

By dark, Captain Streeter did some dead reckoning and figured he was about halfway to Chicago. By this time, the glass in the wheelhouse windows was smashed; the door on the weather side had been ripped off. Streeter had lashed himself to the binnacle. It was well that he did. A dozen times in those dreadful hours gigantic waves swept across the *Reutan's* deck and would have carried him away had he not been made fast. Maria and the "crew" discreetly stayed below, although bilge water was steadily rising toward the boiler.

It was the worst Lake Michigan gale in years. As the night wore on it seemed impossible for the *Reutan* to weather it, and the engine had long since ceased to produce more than a consumptive cough above the howling wind. Maria, after one unusually terrifying list, popped her head through the hatch into the wheelhouse. "Are we through, Captain?" she yelled.

"Through, hell!" Streeter bellowed. "Tell that landlubber to give her more steam and we'll make Chicago beach."

The Captain must have transferred some of his dauntless courage to the "crew," for presently the old engine chugged faster under an increased head of steam. After a while, in a dazzling display of lightning and a roar of thunder like the explosion of a block-buster, the Government breakwater at the entrance to Chicago harbor loomed ahead.

At that very moment the engineer and Maria clawed at each other to get through the hatch.

"The boiler's busting, Captain," they screamed. "The seams are letting go right now."

"Git below, blast yer spineless hide!" Streeter roared at the terrified engineer, and heaved a belaying pin at his head. "Keep that steam up until she lets go. I'm going to beach her."

Beach her he did, too. She plowed into a sandbar exactly 451 feet from shore. As dawn broke through a still storm-drenched sky, the *Reutan* was steady for the first time in ten hours.

From somewhere in his water-soaked clothing Captain Streeter pulled a bottle. Maria was first; she took a long swig. Next the "crew" tipped it up, and the neck practically disappeared down his throat.

The Captain held it to the gray light, squinting at the grog remaining. As casually as though drinking a cup of tea, the old buzzard drained the bottle of a half-pint of the fiery booze, then tossed the bottle over the side, wiped the drooping ends of a walrus mustache and made a momentous decision.

"We're going to stay here. We'll live in the scow right where she lies."

A SONG WAS BORN...

"When a body meets a body, comin' through the Rye" . . . Most of us have been singing the words, off and on, all our lives. And, if we've thought about their meaning at all, probably we've assumed that when he wrote the poem Robert Burns was referring to a field of waving grain.

There is, in Scotland, a little highland stream named the Rye. Shallow enough to ford in most spots, many young people didn't bother to walk out of the way to find a foot bridge when they wanted to cross. And the pink-cheeked Scots girls, going to and from school and church and market, would grasp their skirts and petticoats, lifting them as they stepped through the foot or two of water.

And it became a custom for kilned Scots lads to watch for such crossings: They'd wade out and meet the girls in midstream. It was easy to steal a kiss from a lassie whose hands were occupied with yards and yards of skirt. Probably Burns himself, in his youth, had played the game about which he wrote his immortal song, "*Comin' Through the Rye*."

Maria agreed as was her custom. The "crew" was put ashore in the dory and hurried away through the sand, shells and underbrush toward the dilapidated brick tenements that were Chicago's North Shore skyline.

Captain Streeter and Maria now took stock of their situation. When the seas abated there was so little water between the stranded *Reutan* and the beach that one could wade to dry ground without trouble. A short distance astern a crude rock breakwater protected their position to some extent from the gales that frequently swept the lake.

An hour of inspecting the location in the dory convinced the Captain that luck had been with him in choosing the spot to beach his ship as well as saving them from the storm.

Returning to the deck of the *Reutan*, he told Maria, "She'll fill in fast with sand around us. Purty soon we'll have a path right up to the shore."

No dwelling was closer than a mile to the sandbar where the *Reutan* nestled snugly on the bottom. A few inquisitive beachcombers gaped at the derelict that had been washed up by the storm, but when they saw it was still manned, they went their way without interference or offers of help.

Captain Streeter now went to work on his new home. In a short time, with the help of driftwood boards that Maria gathered, he converted the wheelhouse into a small but comfortable cabin. A few days later he sold the old engine and boiler to a junk dealer for enough to transform the hold into two sizable rooms. This done, he went ashore to locate his nearest neighbors and purchase supplies.

Maria met him on deck when he returned. "Where's the liquor?" she demanded.

The Captain, a look of dismay on his weatherbeaten face, admitted he had forgotten to buy any.

"Captain Streeter, ain't you ashamed of yourself to have all that food and no whiskey? You go right back and bring some down here."

For the remainder of the summer of 1886 Captain Streeter was unmolested. There was a building boom in progress on the North Side. Old brick hovels were being torn down and replaced with modern structures. Huge excavations were being dug. Thousands of tons of debris were being hauled away.

Never one to miss a golden opportunity, the Captain became acquainted with the contractors. He convinced them the short haul to his beach was better for them than the long trip to other dumps. Shrewdly, he told them where to unload, and by

November there was a crude but solid causeway from the shoreline to his stranded *Reutan*. Throughout the winter of 1886-1887 the procession of horse-drawn trucks continued, enlarging the causeway until it was 200 feet wide. With the winter storms, Lake Michigan came to the Captain's assistance. The heavy seas washed in sand which piled up against the old breakwater and secured his causeway.

When spring came and the ice went out, the Captain had a plot of dry land surrounding the *Reutan* on all sides. Sand completely filled the shallows. Eventually it built up an area of 186 acres. To the few Chicagoans who noticed the transformation, it looked like a new city dump. To the Captain and Maria, it was the promised land.

From the deck of the *Reutan* he surveyed the result of his handiwork made possible by unsuspecting contractors and the Almighty.

"We'll call 'er Streeterville, b'God!"

For the next three years Captain Streeter and Maria had no unusual trouble. Police records for the period state that a "George Wellington Streeter, former mariner and steamboat owner, is a trespasser claiming an area of land near the lake front where he has a residence built on a stranded boat, and has fenced off 186 acres." But nothing was done about it.

During this period Captain Streeter, then past 50, began to dream again of the fortune that had eluded him since his youth. Numerous times he had accumulated sizable sums of money, but his pioneering spirit and gambling instincts never permitted him to keep it long. Born to early Michigan settlers, he had worked in the lumber woods and later owned a logging company of his own. When this failed he turned to trapping for a time, and he later toured the then Wild West in a prairie schooner.

When the Civil War broke out, he joined the Union forces, became a captain of infantry and served with distinction, fighting in many bloody battles. He emerged unscathed. At the close of the war the Captain went into show business. He organized a circus, bought a menagerie, toured the East, made money one season, lost it the next and was back where he started.

Mixed up in a dozen other ventures as the years passed, the most memorable was his partnership with Frank and Jesse James, in which he put his few remaining dollars. But when he discovered the nature of their business, he got cold feet for the first and last time in his life, and beat a hasty retreat. Soon he picked up another stake in the freighting racket. This might have been the beginning of the fortune of which he dreamed. He in-

vested it with Dutchy Lehman in a Chicago theater. The wanderlust overcame him again, however, and he pulled out. Dutchy liked him and pleaded that he reconsider. But the Captain was off as soon as he sold his share. A short time later Lehman opened the establishment that was to become the Fair Store.

Then Streeter married Maria Mulholland. He had experienced one early matrimonial venture which ended when his bride had eloped with his last \$700. But Maria was of a different breed. A dark-eyed, oversized brunette beauty in her forties, her only fault was an inordinate liking for whisky. She would go away on a binge for days at a time. It was while touring the Kansas City saloons looking for her that he met a stranger who inveigled him into buying a ship for running arms to Central American revolutionists.

Captain Streeter always was a picturesque figure. Tall, broad of shoulder, powerful, red-headed and with the courage of a lion in any kind of a fight, he swaggered through life, taking the good with the bad and never complaining. He unvarnishedly dressed in tight-fitting striped britches, handmade boots and a weatherbeaten cutaway coat. Beneath this was a fancy vest partly concealing a soiled and wrinkled "boiled" shirt. Attached was a celluloid collar with which he sometimes wore an ascot, sometimes not. To top off this amazing get-up, he sported a plug hat. The costume probably was the result of his ringmaster days in the circus. Captain Streeter never lost the swagger, the pompous demeanor and the booming voice acquired in the sawdust ring.

In the spring of 1889, the Captain decided he and Maria, as property-owners, rated a better house. So he bought an old scow, had her towed to the lengthening sandbar a hundred yards from the *Reutan*, and beached her. He thereupon built a second story on her deck, again with driftwood boards collected by Maria. When the structure was finished they moved in and called it "The Castle." The *Reutan* was dismantled.

One day, toward the end of summer, N. K. Fairbanks, a wealthy property-owner along the North Side beach before the Captain started his "development," paid Streeter a visit. "You've got to get out of here," Fairbanks ordered. "That's my land up there. I've got riparian rights."

Captain Streeter's face clouded and his jaw set in a hard, grim line. "You're wrong," he bellowed. "I've got squatters' rights and the right of eminent domain. All this here land is mine! I made it." He waved his arm

expansively, indicating his sand-land "estate."

"What's more," he went on, squirting a stream of tobacco juice on Fairbanks' polished boots, "I got this."

From behind him he produced his favorite weapon, an old Army musket, loaded with birdshot. "Now git out!"

At that instant Maria strode to the Captain's side, waving an ancient pistol in one hand and an axe in the other. "That's right, you thieving old son-of-a-bitch," she screamed. "This land is ours, not yours."

The pistol boomed and she let fly with the axe as Fairbanks fled, shouting that he would have the law on them.

Thus was fired the first shot in the "Streeterville War." It was to echo and re-echo throughout Chicago and Illinois countless thousands of times during the following thirty years. Before the shooting ended and the cold war of legal wits began, Streeterville, as it is known to this day, was hemmed in on all sides except the lake shore by towering skyscrapers that include the Drake Hotel, modern apartment houses and McKinlock University campus. Fronting all is Lake Shore Drive and Lincoln Park.

Fairbanks lost no time complaining to his attorney. The next day the lawyer reconnoitered Streeterville. He returned, puzzled. There was some measure of justice in the Captain's claim, he informed his client, ending with the admonition to "go slow."

The interest shown by Fairbanks in his property opened new vistas of promotion to the swashbuckling, shrewd Captain. Within a short time he invited numerous of his saloon cronies to Streeterville. He sold them lots, and presently in addition to the Captain's castle, a dozen shacks had sprung up. The police began to receive complaints about the shantytown. They did nothing.

About this time Potter Palmer, millionaire real-estate operator, had observed the advantages of the North Side. Quietly he began buying property along the north shore for a song. It was the beginning of a new era for Chicago. But Palmer never was able to grab the Captain's land for a song. When Streeter saw the modern homes and larger buildings rising along the western boundary of his land, he nodded.

"Good. Now our land will be worth more."

This was true, of course, but it also intensified the smoldering opposition to Streeterville and its unsightly shacks. Moreover, it had the same effect on property-owners along the beach as it had on the Captain. They claimed the Streeters were mere-

ly squatters without legal rights. If they could legally seize the built-up beach land through riparian rights, they could oust the old buzzard and reap a rich reward.

Until 1894 there were minor skirmishes between residents of Streeterville, led by the unconquerable Captain, and goons, hired by the real-estate interests to harass them. But the threat of the Captain's musket and his axe usually kept them at a distance.

That summer the Chicago Title and Trust Company, which had guaranteed title on lots sold by Palmer bordering the disputed territory, stepped into the picture. The battle was joined.

ONE day the Captain was dozing on the stoop of his "Castle" when five rough-looking characters came up.

"Howdy, friends, what can I do for you?" he greeted them.

"We ain't your friends—and you can get out of here right now," the leader retorted. He flashed an official-looking badge. "We've been sent down here to get rid of you squatters. Get moving!"

Outnumbered five to one and not having his musket handy, the Captain turned toward the door. "Sure," he drawled. "I'll get my things right away."

The strangers halted him. "Not so fast," one ordered. "We're wise to you and your old blunderbuss. Git, now! We'll toss your junk out to you."

The next the deputies knew Maria was confronting them with the musket, its barrel sawed off. "On your way, bums!" she shouted, waving the lethal weapon.

The men knew when they were beaten and turned to go. Instantly the gun boomed. Peppered with birdshot, the Cook County deputies howled with pain as they scrambled over each other getting off the Castle.

That night they recruited reinforcements and returned. Waiting until they thought the Captain and Maria were asleep, they crept toward the Castle. Trying a door through the old hull and finding it unlocked, they gathered around to rush the beleaguered pair.

This time an ancient method of defense was unloaded on the law. From the deck above, Maria and the Captain calmly poured several gallons of boiling water on them. The carnage was terrific. Dangerously scalded and yelling in agony, the invaders retreated in disorder.

For a week, calm prevailed. Then the storm burst. A lone city policeman ventured on the Captain's property and immediately halted at

sight of the musket slung carelessly in the crook of the old warrior's arm.

"What you looking for, officer?" Streeter demanded.

"Nothing in particular," the cop replied.

"Good," the Captain said. "We got lots of that. But suppose you look somewhere else besides on my land."

The next day a dozen city policemen, armed with billies and revolvers, advanced across the sand toward the castle.

"Don't come no closer," Streeter bellowed when he saw them. He raised the musket to his shoulder as Maria appeared with her favorite axe. "I'll shoot to kill, this time."

After a hasty council of war, a sergeant advanced. "We have a warrant for your arrest, Streeter, for felonious assault." He waited a moment. "Will you come along peacefully?"

"No!" the Captain shouted. "You can go to hell an' you know what to do with the warrant . . . piece by piece, if it suits your fancy."

There was another conference among the cops. The same sergeant spoke. "You better come without any more trouble, Streeter. We'll get you sooner or later."

The Captain wasn't an unreasonable man. He saw the point. "All right," he announced. "Send one unarmed officer—and the rest of you get out. Then I'll go along."

It was humiliating to the cops, but they agreed.

Arraigned in court that afternoon on a charge of attempted assault with a deadly weapon and resisting arrest, Captain Streeter defended himself so logically and with such eloquence in spite of his ungrammatical lingo that the judge announced:

"Case dismissed."

The newspapermen howled in delight and featured the story, to the embarrassment of the police and the guffaws of a half-million readers. Old Streeter, they wrote, not only thrashed the cops with rough stuff but humbled them in court as well.

INFURIATED at the Captain's success in defying the stern authority of the law, Chief of Police Kiple, under special orders from Mayor Harrison, immediately organized an expedition to round up the Streeters and put an end to the comic-opera war once and for all. The campaign strategy was to attack in force at night and shoot it out if necessary.

The Captain had friends in the police department as well as the saloons, and he was informed of the plot. That night he and Maria concealed themselves behind a shack near the Castle and waited for the assault. Shortly after midnight it came.

Across the sand crept 25 of the department's picked men, armed to the teeth.

When most of the invaders had climbed to the deck of the Castle, Streeter with the musket, and Maria with her axe, counter-attacked. From below he shouted, "Here we are, boys! Come and get us if you dare."

As the cops abandoned the Castle and deployed in the direction whence the Captain's voice had come, he let go with the musket. Three policemen fell in the first barrage. Calmly the old fighter reloaded and fired again, practically point-blank, as four burly cops descended on him. They also fell, peppered with birdshot.

Meanwhile, Maria had been getting in some telling licks with the axe. She practically cut the arm off a captain and sunk the rusty blade in the shoulder of a patrolman.

The Captain's third charge from the musket was the pay-off. The leader of the ill-fated police attack got it in the legs, whereupon he turned tail and ran as fast as his painfully wounded underpinnings would permit. The remaining members of the sortie retreated in utter rout.

This time the newspapers treated it a little more seriously than the first skirmish but continued their ribbing of the coppers. The *Tribune* blasted a headline on its front page that screamed: "Cap Streeter and His Joan of Arc Repel the Blues!"

The casualties included nine policemen in the hospital, two with critical axe wounds, seven suffering from the effects of birdshot. One had lost an eye.

Captain Streeter and Maria were uninjured, unperturbed, unrepentant.

News of the Captain's successful defense of his "property" spread swiftly. More prospective citizens of Streeterville bought lots from him and started building their unsightly shacks.

Captain Streeter was arrested and charged with felonious assault. They

tried to get Maria, too, but she had disappeared. It wouldn't have made any difference, anyway, for the Captain was speedily set free when he pleaded self-defense. "Why, they never showed me a warrant," he argued. "It was dark, too, and we couldn't see their uniforms. We thought they was hoodlums hired by the real-estate thieves to come and kill us."

There was now no doubt in the minds of the police that Streeter meant business. So far no one had

The fabulous Drake Hotel, right, and the swank residential apartments of Chicago's Gold Coast, below, are on or near what was once Streeterville and are still hotly contested.



been killed. But the next onslaught easily could end in tragedy. The cops, thinking logically, feared they might wind up with the largest number of casualties. They wanted no further part of Captain Streeter. So they laid off, ignoring repeated demands of near-by property-owners to do their duty and throw the lawless squatters out.

Again there was a temporary lull in the Streeterville war. During the next year Cook County deputy sheriffs, reinforced by private detectives employed by the real-estate interests, harassed the Captain, but he bullied his way out of clashes or fought them off with whatever weapons were handy. A private detective was shot through the heart with a leaden slug. The Captain was accused of murder, but when he satisfied the judge at his hearing that he never used anything more lethal than birdshot in his musket, the charge was dismissed.

Another time one of the Captain's staunch supporters in Streeterville practically emasculated a snooping deputy sheriff with a pitchfork. The victim died a month later. Streeter represented his follower in court and pleaded his case so successfully on grounds of self-defense that the fellow was acquitted.

Nor was Maria inactive on occasions when the Captain happened to be carousing in his favorite saloons.

Once a pair of detectives surprised her in the bedroom of the Castle where she was sleeping off the effects of a spree. Neither the musket nor her axe were handy. One of the intruders, gun in hand, said, "Come on, you old pot, get out of here."

In a flash Maria was on her feet. At the edge of the bed was a half-filled chamber that in her drunken stupor she had neglected to empty. Seizing it, she flung it smack in the officer's face.

"If it's a pot you're interested in, you sneakin' flatfoot, I'll give you one to remember me by!" she shrieked.

The drenched detective, followed by his companion, got out fast.

Another time she drove off three sheriff's deputies with a gallon of kerosene oil lighted with burning rags which she poured over the side of the Castle on them.

But Captain Streeter was no dope. He knew well enough he could not fight the law forever and get away with it. So he turned his agile mind to finding a more legal way of battling his enemies than mayhem and murder.

After many days spent in the Cook County courthouse, he came upon a document that placed the Streeterville war on a new basis and gave it national interest as well as local notoriety.

In 1821 President James Monroe had appointed one John Wall, a sur-



More of "Governor" George Wellington Streeter's "District of Lake Michigan," which has become incredibly valuable lake-front property.

veyor, to establish the boundary lines of the State of Illinois. Wall did as instructed, and filed a map. At the time of the survey the shore of Lake Michigan was less than a hundred feet east of Michigan avenue. So he marked the boundary of Illinois and the city of Chicago on that line. As the shifting shore of the lake gradually moved out, filling with sand, the original line set by Wall never was changed.

Elated, the Captain went back to Maria, shouting they had the land-thieves crucified at last. "We ain't in the city of Chicago," he bellowed. "We ain't even in Illinois, b'God!"

SUDDENLY the importance of his words dawned on him. "We ain't in the United States either, unless I say so," he announced gleefully. "They'll have to come to me and ask if we want to be annexed to the Union."

Maria scowled, attempting to make some kind of sense to the Captain's exultant oratory. "Well, Captain Streeter, where in hell are we, then?"

It was a poser, all right, but the Captain never was stumped for long.

"We're a deestrick," he declared solemnly, "—the Deestrick of Lake Michigan. Just like the Deestrick of Columbia."

Thoughtful for a moment while Maria sought to gulp down such an unmasqued mouthful of nonsense without getting mental indigestion, the Captain presently concluded his amazing declaration of independence.

"I'm the Governor," he said, "and the Castle is our deestrick capital."

Having cast the die and found the number to his liking, Captain Streeter lost no time letting the press know what he had discovered and that he intended to run his private country without the assistance or interference of any "goddam crooked politicians."

The story made the headlines, as he figured it would. It also sent a lot of high-priced legal talent scurrying to their lawbooks and precedents to find a defense for this new twist.

Seeking now to consolidate his gains, "Governor" Streeter immediately filed an application with the Federal Department of the Interior for a land patent on the district.

The very next day the citizens of the District of Lake Michigan, together with several hundred North Side residents, watched the Stars and Stripes raised over the "Capital." The Captain concluded the ceremony with a long harangue during which he read his Declaration of Independence. It started: "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for any body of men to take up arms in the defense of their property and legal rights, a cause must exist . . ."

Streeter then wrote Mayor Harrison and Chief of Police Kipley to inform them that the District of Lake Michigan was not a part of Chicago. "I'll have no interference from you and your Cossacks," he wrote. "Any invasion of my sovereign territory will be repulsed with force."

To back up this threat, the Captain appointed one of his cronies, Billy Niles, "General" of the Army and "Military Governor" of the District. Niles immediately recruited a hundred bums and roustabouts from the waterfront as a nucleus for his regiment. He armed them with guns, clubs and such other lethal weapons as were available.

Finally the Captain held an election in Streeterville to select "representatives to the Council" of his District. When this formality was completed, he notified the Governor of Illinois and President William McKinley of the creation of his independent state. In his best diplomatic language he inquired if the United States of America would be interested in annexing the District of Lake Michigan.

The uproar following these shenanigans was sensational. Newspapers throughout the country played the story as page-one copy. Goaded by persistent needling from the landowners and title companies, the city police again became active. Reporters established "Campaign Headquarters" for the "War." Hourly bulletins were published. Thousands of Chicago citizens gathered to watch the anticipated assault.

It wasn't long coming. One morning at the crack of dawn a hundred hired gunmen, recruited by the real-estate interests, marched on Streeterville. Roaring defiance, the Captain and Maria, backed up by General Niles and his army, advanced to meet them. A pitched battle ensued, but Niles' defenders lacked the guts to pursue a fight such as this. They scattered in all directions.

Forced back to the bulwarks of the castle, the Captain, Maria and Billy barricaded themselves in the hold of the old scow. Shouting triumphantly, the gunmen swarmed to the deck. It looked as though Streeter at last was about to be defeated.

The Captain had other ideas. That night, while the invaders drank whisky from flasks they carried and waited for their quarry to surrender, Streeter sneaked out and rounded up a score of trusty friends as eager for a brawl as himself.

Shortly before daylight these reinforcements fell upon the invaders with devastating results. Clubs crashed on skulls, Maria's axe bit deep into the bodies of whoever got in front of her and the Captain's

musket belched birdshot as swiftly as he could fire and reload. A half hour later the hoodlums were routed.

Thirty-three wounded invaders, several of whom died later, lay on the battlefield when Streeter got around to counting them. He thereupon hired a dump truck, loaded the victims in it and drove to the Chicago Avenue police station.

While the sleepy desk sergeant gaped in astonishment, the Captain insisted that they be locked up on charges of assault and battery, trespassing and unlawful entry.

"I'll be down after breakfast and appear ag'in' 'em," he bellowed.

The upshot of this battle was that city authorities notified the Governor of Illinois that a state of anarchy existed in Streeterville. It was requested that the State militia be sent to put down the "insurrection."

The Governor, being a logical-thinking man, as well as cautious, wondered why the Chicago police couldn't handle a few squatters without so much commotion and bloodshed. He didn't know the Captain.

An emissary visited Streeterville. The Captain met him and listened. When he was through delivering the Governor's verbal ultimatum that the rioting must stop, Streeter told him coldly: "You can advise His Excellency that I'm takin' no guff from him any more than I am from the crooked Chicago cops. If he sends soldiers here we'll use bullets, not birdshot. This here is my land. I intend to defend it as long as I can hold a gun in my hands."

Nothing further happened.

THE Captain now decided he needed a lawyer, so he employed an ambitious attorney by the name of Ed Bailey, who went to work with gusto. A temporary injunction, successfully argued, won an armistice as far as hoodlums hired by the real-estate interests were concerned. Bailey also claimed he had discovered new evidence in old court records which would end permanently the claims of the warring landowners and give Streeter sole legal rights to the disputed territory.

But the Captain never knew what this information was, if actually it existed. Bailey was ambushed one night and murdered; his pockets and briefcase were rifled.

This incident ushered in a new phase of the war. General Niles began recruiting a fresh army. He also bought several old cannons, polished them up and loaded them with small stones, rusty nails and pieces of metal. They were mounted at strategic spots around Streeterville where they could be swung in any direction at a moment's notice.

When word of this reached the police, they retaliated by arming a couple of old fire-tugs with Gatling guns. These vessels kept up a constant patrol offshore from the castle. The cops, at the insistence of the land-owners, also renewed their attacks on Streeterville, but only in the skirmish stage, avoiding hand-to-hand conflict.

One day while the captain was away, a dozen cops, tipped off that the old man was not at home, attempted to storm the Castle. But they forgot about General Niles. As bloody a fighter as his boss, and with the added advantage that he would kill without hesitation, he turned a cannon loaded with canister on them and touched it off. The police once again departed hastily to have pieces of rock and nails picked out of their hides.

Things now had reached such a pass that something had to be done. The authorities knew it. They had had no success at rough stuff and not much more in the courts. Then someone discovered that Streeter was selling whisky without a city license.

WHEN two officers came to arrest him, he gave up without a struggle and went along to jail. That night a special strong-arm squad visited Streeterville and put the torch to most of the shacks. Why they didn't burn the Castle also is not known. Perhaps they figured the Captain would retaliate by burning police headquarters.

Infuriated at the coup, Streeter accused Police Captain Herman Shaack, of the Chicago Avenue station, of instigating the raid. The newspapers printed the Captain's story. Captain Shaack came to Streeterville to demand a retraction.

The Captain was away and Maria was caught unaware. Seeing two revolvers on a table, Shaack took them.

When Streeter returned and heard about it, he tucked his musket under his arm and headed for the police station. Barging into Shaack's office, he pointed the gun at the police captain and roared, "Gimme those persuaders or I'll blow you to hell."

Shaack's face turned purple with rage. "I'll put you away for life for this!" he stormed.

But he handed over the weapons.

Threatened with arrest for holding up a police station, Captain Streeter took it calmly. "Sure, I'll go along," he told the officer who came to serve the warrant.

Confronted by Shaack, Streeter eyed him coldly. "Either you withdraw that warrant, copper, or I'll have you fired from the force."

Shaack laughed. "You don't say!" he retorted.

"Maybe you'd like to have me tell the Mayor about how you had to leave Philadelphia because the law

was looking for you," the Captain went on.

Beaten again, Captain Shaack tore up the warrant. "Let him go," he ordered the arresting officer.

A week later Shaack resigned and disappeared. . . .

Streeter's tormentors now turned to a new tactic. They employed John Kirk, a former frontier gunman with a bad reputation and a quick trigger-finger, to pick a fight with Streeter and kill him. Kirk tried it a couple of times, but Streeter always beat him to the draw. Thereupon Kirk rounded up several of his killer friends and started out to "get" Streeter without the formality of fomenting a quarrel!

When the shooting was over there was one dead man, but it wasn't Streeter. During the fusillade Kirk got a slug in the heart.

For the first time since the tempest belched him out of the lake, the Captain was in real trouble. He was arrested for murder, and indicted. Months later, when brought to trial, Captain Streeter was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in Joliet.

The shock killed Maria. At last the Captain's enemies were in the saddle. The thorn in their sides had been removed. Indomitable, axe-swinging Maria was gone to a happier hunting ground. General Niles disappeared. The authorities burned the Castle and the shacks, cleaned up the dump, and the march of building progress was in motion. . . .

Nine months later the victorious real-estate interests had cause for dismay. After a personal investigation, the Governor of Illinois pardoned Captain Streeter and set him free. The Captain returned to Streeterville and renewed the fight with a fierceness and vindictive bitterness that made the old battles seem insignificant. His musket was gone but now he had a heavy-caliber revolver which he could use with appalling effectiveness. There were frequent shootings. Streeter managed to keep himself clear of arrest, though not of suspicion. The police, for the most part, let him alone.

Meantime, between court battles, the Captain built himself a new brick "castle." Shortly thereafter he married Alma Lockwood, from Wakarusa, Wisconsin, and installed her as the new wife of the Governor of the District of Lake Michigan. The Captain, almost 70 by this time, affectionately called her "Ma."

Ma Streeter immediately captured the imaginations and hearts of Chicago reporters. A rugged pioneer woman with a disarming smile and a wallop in her gnarled fist, she was as loyal to the Captain as Maria ever

had been, and equally as rough and ruthless a brawler.

But the end of Captain Streeter's fighting days were at hand. Soon after, he had his last recorded battle with a strong-arm squad of Chicago police, during which he shot and seriously wounded a police captain, and clawed several patrolmen before being subdued. His own skull was creased with a bullet and he lost an eye in the meleé.

For this fracas he was tried and acquitted.

At last the law moved forward inexorably. The Captain lost several important court cases; he was jailed every time he was recognized in Chicago. Finally, on December 10, 1918, a writ was granted to Francis Stanley Rickords, giving him ownership to the land on which the brick castle was standing.

While the Captain and Ma Streeter cursed and sat by helplessly, the castle was emptied of its contents and torn down. A little later a court decision rejected his claim to his beloved "Deestrick."

For three years thereafter Captain Streeter fought on, grimly but hopelessly. He bought a small houseboat and anchored it in the Chicago river. He and Ma lived there, continuing the legal battle.

In mid-January, of 1921, Captain George Wellington Streeter contracted pneumonia, and on January 21 he died. He was 84 years old.

The city turned out in force for the old warrior's funeral. The mourners were represented by city officials, politicians, and thousands of citizens who came to pay their respects to as game and relentless a fighter as the community ever had seen.

UNTIL her death on October 19, 1936, Ma Streeter continued to battle in court for the Captain's rights to Streeterville.

For the next few years the Streeter heirs filed suits based on the old Captain's claims. On April 15, 1940, a new complaint filed by the heirs and others who had purchased lots from Captain Streeter was dismissed by the Honorable William H. Holly, in United States District Court, on petition of the Chicago Title and Trust Company.

Even today the legal battle continues. New claims are constantly coming up, new evidence is "discovered," old titles are questioned.

But the Captain no longer cares. Untroubled at last, the old scallawag sleeps on, with only the memory of his unconquerable spirit and thirst for a fight remaining in Streeterville to contrast the great monuments of empire builders with what once was the "Billion-Dollar Dump." •



Illustrated by: AL TARTER

It was supposed to be Milo March's vacation, and hardly the time when he expected to wake up in bed with a corpse. Especially a red-headed corpse, one with

HAIR *the color of* BLOOD

BY M. E. CHABER

IT WAS FRIDAY AFTERNOON. I came in on the Denver flight to the Los Angeles International Airport. A taxi took me to the Monica-Wilshire Hotel, in Santa Monica. On Ocean Avenue, facing the Pacific through the lace of kingly palm trees, it is a swank hotel; and in California when something is swank they put it on with a trowel. In addition to the regular rooms, there was a double row of bungalow rooms out under the palm trees. I took one of the bungalows, at fifteen dollars a day. Too rich for my blood, but I was going to pretend I could afford it.

It was the beginning of my two-week vacation. I was in a to-hell-with-business-bring-on-the-girls mood, and I was going to enjoy myself if it killed me. It almost did.

I tipped the bellboy enough to give a small-type midget old-age security. He did everything but kiss my hand, and left. I bounced on the bed just to get the feel of luxury.

That was when the woman screamed. It was a high, shrill scream, as if somebody had made an improper advance to a steam whistle. It was

filled with terror. Then it shut off—too quickly.

It had come from the bungalow directly behind mine. Before I could remind myself that I was on vacation, I was outside and heading for the end of the row of bungalows.

The door of the corner bungalow opened and a girl looked out. She had red hair that curled down to her shoulders. She was wearing a Bikini bathing suit that left little to the imagination—but imagination could never have matched the real thing. It almost made me forget the scream.

"Did you hear someone scream?" she asked me.

I stopped taking inventory and looked at her face. "I think it was on the other side," I said. "I was just going to take a look." I hoped my voice indicated I could be talked out of it.

She did the next-best thing. "Stop and tell me about it on the way back," she said.

"Sure," I agreed, taking another look to be sure the Bikini hadn't moved; then I went around the corner.

The bungalows were built in a double row, back to back. I stopped in front of the third door, which would be the one right behind mine. My better sense told me to go back to the redhead and forget about the scream—but if I'd had any better sense I would have stayed in my bungalow. I knocked.

The door was opened by a man. He was young, maybe in his thirties, and good-looking, if you like the George Raft type. He had his coat off, but he was wearing one of those fancy vests you see around these days. This one was really blinding. It was canary yellow with red stitching.

"Sorry to bother you," I said, "but I heard somebody screaming. Anything I can do to help?"

Now that I was there, I felt a little foolish about the whole thing. I expected him to tell me I could mind my own business, then slam the door in my face. Instead he gave me a grin that had been wound a little too tight.

"It was my wife," he said. "She cut herself. I'm sorry she disturbed you, Mr.—"

"March," I said. "Milo March."

"The least we can do," he said, "is offer you a drink in return for offering to help. Won't you come in?"

Sometimes you'll do something that even as you're doing it you know is a mistake. That's the way it was with me. I stepped into the bungalow, knowing damn well there was something wrong with the setup. There was.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw him move, and I tried to duck. But I was a little too late. Something cracked against my head, there was an echo of pain inside, and that was all. I didn't even feel myself hit the floor.

The next thing I knew, my head was hurting. That was all I knew for at least a minute. I was lying down and my head hurt. I struggled with that for another minute before I remembered why my head hurt. I hadn't opened my eyes yet. I could feel something across the lower part of my legs and I could feel a sheet under me. So I was probably in bed—without any clothes on, for I realized the sheet was rubbing against bare skin. My first thought was that somebody had found me and taken me to my room. I opened my eyes to check on it.

The first thing I saw was a magenta cover twisted around me. The cover on my bed had been pink; I remembered that much. It wasn't my room, so it must be the one belonging to the guy with the fancy vest. I raised up on one elbow to look for him. What I saw made me forget all about my headache.

I was in bed with a woman. Both of us were stripped right down to the buff. Her buff must have been pretty nice in its day, but she was already a few years past her day. She had long red hair. Not like the one in the Bikini suit; this one's hair was dark red, like blood. Her throat was the same color. Somebody had slashed it until you could have shoved a fist in it—if you weren't particular where you shoved your fist.

No wonder she'd stopped screaming. Her neck was cut halfway through. There was blood all over the place, including a few generous

smears on my chest. I lifted my hand and it was covered with blood.

I just made it to the bathroom. Then I was sick. It's not that I can't stand the sight of blood; but the knock on the head plus the feel of the drying blood on my hand had been too much. Suddenly my stomach was as sensitive as a careless bride's.

I felt weak, but a little better when I finished. My head had settled down to a steady throb. I was about to wash up, when a key rattled in the door and it swung open. Two cops and a bellhop came in.

"Geez," the bellhop said when he saw me, "he's a fast worker. He checked in only a half hour ago and here he—" He looked at the bed and his face turned green.

The two cops were ahead of him. They'd already seen what was on the bed and they were coming for me. Both of them looked a little tight around the face.

"Take it easy," I told them. "I can explain everything."

"This is going to take some explaining," one of them said dryly.

When I thought about it, I had to admit he was right. I told them my story. It went over like a strip act at a convention of bishops. It sounded silly even to me, but then I was at a disadvantage. It's pretty hard to do any formal talking when everyone else is dressed and you're stark naked.

I THREW in the business about the redhead in the end bungalow. That would at least place me outside of the room before the woman screamed.

"You mean I-B?" the bellhop asked. "There's nobody in there. It's been empty for two days."

"Like hell it's empty," I said. "I never saw a room so well filled."

"Check on it, Joe," one of the cops said to the other.

He was back in two minutes, shaking his head. "It's empty," he said.

After that we sat around in an unfructively silence, waiting for the detectives to arrive. I wanted to get dressed, but they wouldn't hear of it. They liked me the way I was as well as they would ever like me.

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The deluge came in a few minutes. Homicide cops, identification men, and a couple of men from the coroner's office. The two patrolmen and the bellhop got lost in the shuffle. They kept me shoved in a corner while they went over the room. They found the knife on the floor—on the side of the bed I'd been on. They dusted the whole place for prints. One of the men came over and printed me.

Then they photographed everything, including me—cheesecake, yet!

WHEN they'd finished that, the coroner's men started to take her out in a basket. One of the detectives got big-hearted: he let me get washed and put my clothes on. Then we started all over again. But this time they started out by asking for my identification.

I told them and showed them. Milo March; thirty-five years old; Chief Investigator for the Trans-World Insurance Service Corporation, in Denver. Six feet tall. One hundred and eighty-five pounds. A gun permit for Denver, Colorado. Another gun permit for Los Angeles. I'd been out there the year before on a job, but the gun permit was still good.

Finally they got around to my story. I told it a little better this time, fortified by clothes, but it was a cold audience.

After that we went down to Headquarters and I told my tired little story again. They went to work on it piecemeal. They took turns going over the ground with me. Back and forth, like a couple dancing to a broken record.

There are two kinds of cops when it comes to questioning. There are the ones who back up their questions with a nightstick wrapped in a towel. Then there are the cops who are polite, but keep you under a strong light and just keep you talking. The first kind is worse for the first few hours; after that they're both about the same. These were polite cops. Nobody raised his voice or pointed a finger at me. But they kept me telling the same story over and over again until I was so sick of it I was thinking of changing it just to brighten up the day. The way things looked, it could stand a little brightening.

They didn't learn any more than I'd told them the first time, but I learned a couple of things. The dead woman was named Sherry Azana, and she'd registered alone at the hotel. Once she'd been a showgirl. More recently she'd been the girl friend of six or seven big-spending mobsters. For the past two months she'd been in hiding.

Somewhere along the course, an FBI man dropped in to listen to me. They

were interested in the girl, too. It seemed the local cops and the Government had an idea she might talk a few men into jail, if they could only get her. Apparently some of the men had had the same idea—and they'd reached her first.

I told them about the guy who'd opened the door, but it didn't make much of a dent. I had to admit that the description could fit a lot of people.

Finally, the atmosphere changed a little. Things weren't breaking for me, but they were bending. They talked to a couple of cops in Denver by phone and heard I was a good boy. They heard the same thing from a Los Angeles cop who knew me. They verified the time I'd arrived at the airport. Better yet, the coroner reported that Sherry Azana's throat had been cut from right to the left, meaning the knife had been held in the killer's left hand. They proved to themselves that I was right-handed. Some other bright boy in their lab studied the pictures and said the blood on me had been smeared there instead of spurting onto me.

It wasn't much, but the way things looked I needed all I could get.

"We could hold you, March," one of the detectives finally said. "You're a hell of a long way from being in the clear, but I'll admit there's a reasonable doubt. Several guys have said you're okay, so we're going to let you go. But stick around where we can find you when we want you."

"Sure," I said. I was so tired I didn't much care whether they let me go or not. "I'm on a vacation, remember? They tell me there's nothing like the tan you can get from the reflections off a cop's badge. Only don't overdo it. I don't want to get burned."

"We don't burn them here; we gas them," he said reassuringly.

On that cheerful note, I left. It was just ten hours since they had taken me down there; it felt like ten days.

I went straight back to the hotel and went to bed. But my fifteen-dollar room was wasted that day. The way I felt, I could have slept just as soundly in the gutter.

I slept twelve hours without even turning over. Then I had some breakfast and a double shot of brandy brought in. By the time I'd put that away, I felt better. I finally got around to my problem.

One day of my vacation was gone. I didn't want to spend the rest of it playing footsie with the cops. I'd been working the same side of the street long enough to know that sometimes the cops don't get the right guy. Besides I didn't like being a patsy for any guy in a fancy yellow

vest. I wanted to know two things—where the guy was, and how the other redhead fitted into the picture: the girl in the bikini suit who'd been in the room that wasn't occupied.

There was a car-rental place across the street from the hotel. I could have my choice of one Ford or of seven Cadillacs. Being a modest man, I took a Cadillac so no one would know I was a tourist. Anyway, it figured. Anywhere else you'd say that the condemned man ate a hearty meal; in California you'd say he took a ride in a Cadillac.

I drove down to Beverly Hills and found the most expensive men's shop. I went in and asked about fancy yellow vests, describing the one I'd seen.

"Just a minute," the salesman said. He went into the rear and came back with a yellow vest. It was a duplicate of the one I'd seen on the guy who sapped me. "You mean this one?"

"That's it," I said. "Don't tell me every store in town has it."

"Hardly," he said with a smile that was meant to say that everyone wouldn't appreciate this item. He was right. In fact, sir, I doubt if more than ten shops will carry this particular line. And it is not on sale yet."

That sounded more interesting. "What does that mean?" I asked.

"These are advance samples of a line we're getting from England in a few months. We have one of each model so we can take advance orders. The same applies to the other stores, I'm sure."

He gave me the name of the man through whom they'd ordered the vests. I thanked him and left.

I found the wholesaler in. He was a little cagey at first, but I flashed my identification and gave him a fast line about insurance investigations, and he finally came across with the list. There were twelve stores that had samples of the yellow vest. That made it a little easier than I had expected it to be.

STARTING in Los Angeles, I began to work my way west. The first four stores were certainly blanks. They showed me their sample yellow number, and in each case it obviously hadn't been worn. And there was no one around who looked like my boy.

The fifth shop was on Sunset Boulevard, between Los Angeles and Beverly Hills: the Strip—a place called "Hollywood's Fancy." All I had was the name and the address. But I could guess what it looked like. Everything on the Strip had a certain air. The night-clubs looked like small palaces; the stores always reminded me of someone dressed up but with no place to go; while the offices of agents, outnumbering everything else, had the

look and the smell of high-priced broths.

When I found the store, it looked exactly as I expected it would. The display windows were filled with fifty-dollar ties and hundred-dollar suede jackets. I went in, expecting to find another velvet-voiced clerk who would look at my two-dollar tie as if it had polio. But it wasn't like that at all. As soon as I saw the two clerks, I knew that I had finally come to the right place.

They both looked like undergraduates at San Quentin. One of them was blond and one was dark-haired, one was short and the other tall; but they still looked as if they were cut from the same pattern. It was in the way they moved, in the lack of expression on their faces. When they looked at me, all they saw was the outline of a target. You can find their kind wherever there's an opportunity for a slow brain to make a fast buck. The fact that they were wearing two-hundred-dollar suits did not do a thing for them except accent it. The coats had been cut by a good tailor, but he hadn't been good enough to conceal the guns in the shoulder holsters.

They were sitting back of the counter, playing cards. They looked up and through me as I entered.

"Just window-shopping," I smiled. "Then do it outside," one of them said flatly. "We don't sell no windows." Their expressions didn't change, but it was obvious they thought this was very funny.

"How about fancy vests?" I asked. "Beat it," one of them said. "We're busy. Besides we got all the dummies we need."

I walked over and looked at a rack of ties. "I'm looking for a guy. He's left-handed. Yesterday he was wearing a yellow vest that was imported from England. He used to have a girl friend named Sherry."

You could feel the atmosphere change in the place. They'd lost their interest in cards. I was getting as much attention as Marilyn Monroe at a Junior Prom.

"Yeah?" one of them rasped. "What about it?"

"Him and his girl friend," I said. "She was thinking of taking up singing. He figured it might hurt his social position, so the next time he met her, he cut her dead."

They tightened up a little more. "Who are you?"

"I," I said in my best YMCA voice, "am the founder of the Society for the Preservation of the Memory of Sherry Azana. I'm recruiting charter members."

They looked at each other; then their eyes swung back to me. "A wise

guy!" one of them said. "Go tell Fancy."

The second one went back and slipped through a door in the rear of the store. The other one stayed to watch me.

The other man came back. "The boss wants to see him," he said.

"You loaded, pal?" my watchdog asked. He got up and came around the counter. His eyes were bright enough to use in a Murine ad.

I shook my head. I wasn't being exactly truthful. I'd left my .38 in my suitcase, but I'd stuck a small gun in my pocket. It was an old four-barreled derringer. I'd had it rebores so it would take a .32. It was always nice to have four extra shots. And it was small enough to fit in the palm of my hand. I stuck both of my hands in my pockets, curling one hand around the gun. I wasn't ready for a showdown yet, but I didn't want to lose it either.

He gave me a fast patting. He even patted the pocket where my hand was, but he was looking for a regular gun that couldn't have been covered by a band.

"You've got a nice touch," I told him. "Maybe we could go steady."

He wasn't amused. "Inside," he said, motioning me toward the door.

As I went through, I could see this was a soundproofed room. Then I turned my attention to other matters.

"He's clean, Fancy," one of the men said.

The office was in the Hollywood tradition. It was furnished with the best. The rug was so thick and soft you couldn't have made time across it without snowshoes. There were a couple of big leather chairs. The desk was covered with leather, too. And back of it was the guy I was looking for. He was wearing a fawn-colored suede vest instead of the yellow number, but it was the same boy.

Now I knew why he'd looked a little familiar when I saw him the day before. The name "Fancy" had jogged my memory. I'd seen his picture. This was Frank Bradford, better known as Fancy Bradford. The Crime Syndicate had sent him in to replace Mickey Cohen when the Feds awarded Mickey an all-expense vacation. Fancy Bradford was the Number One man on the West Coast. I was traveling in fast company.

There was one thing I hadn't noticed the day before: there were a couple of scratches high on one cheek. They looked like ones that might have been made by nails.

I'd wondered if he would pretend he'd never seen me before, but he didn't bother. He was grinning up at me. The day before his smile had been tight, but then it was a squeeze play. Today he was top dog again

and his grin showed it. The morning papers were on his desk.

"Is this the guy, Fancy?" one of the men asked.

"This is the guy," Fancy said. "Milo March, insurance dick, self-appointed Boy Scout and sucker. Milo, meet the boys—Lance Harker and Barry Alfama." Lance Harker was the tall one.

"I've already met the boys," I said. "They're sweet."

The "boys" scowled and Fancy laughed. "Sit down," he said, gesturing toward the leather chairs.

I was going to say no; then I had an idea. I sat down in one of the chairs. It was like sitting on a cloud. I took my hand out of my pocket and thrust it down between the cushion and the chair. The leather was as soft as a baby's thigh.

"How'd you get out?" he asked.

"Walked," I said. "It's not that I'm particular, but it seemed silly to stay in jail when I was paying for a good room. Besides I wanted to find a guy who was wearing a yellow vest. I owed him something; and I like to pay my debts."

"Don't strain yourself," he said. "It'll be healthier. How much do you know?"

"Enough. You killed her because you thought she might talk. I'd guess she had so much on you that you didn't even want one of your men doing the job. . . . What's the matter with your cheek? Cut yourself while shaving?"

His fingers passed over the scratches. "The bitch!" he said. Then he stopped, remembering, and his gaze came back to me. "You tell the cops about me?"

"Only a rough description," I said. "I didn't know yesterday who you were. They didn't buy much of it—said it could be a thousand guys."

"And now?" His voice was gentle, but it wasn't soft. "How much do you want?"

"I got news for you, Fancy," I said. "There ain't many of us, but I'm one of those guys who doesn't want your money for any reason. Maybe you wear imported vests and two-hundred-dollar suits, but in my book you're still a bum. A cheap bum."

He didn't like that. His eyes brightened. "You think you're going to the cops?" he asked. His voice was wearing a sneer. "It's a waste of time. I've got an alibi, a good one. I've beat tougher homicide raps than this one. Maybe the frame won't stay on you, but it can't be hung back on me. And if you nose around too much, maybe I'll let it be two raps to beat."

"Maybe I'll go to the cops," I said. I stood up. "Maybe I won't. Maybe



There were a couple of leather chairs, and a desk covered with leather, too. And back of it was the guy I was looking for. He was wearing a fawn-colored suede vest instead of the yellow number, but it was the same boy. Now I knew why he'd looked familiar the day before.

I'll handle it myself. I don't like being pushed around by punks—even fancy punks."

For just a second he looked uncertain, his gaze darting at his two men. "I told you he was clean," Lance Harker said. "I shook him down. Nothing. He's a tourist."

"Okay," Fancy said. His eyes came back to meet mine. They were like black granite. "You're lucky, March. You're lucky I don't have the boys dust you right here. Or do it myself. Now get out before I change my mind. And stay out."

"Sure," I said. I went to the door and opened it. Then I looked back at the three of them. "You've had your fun, Fancy. That was a real pretty frame, for an ad-lib—and it almost worked. But the next one's going to be on me. Don't make any dates too far ahead."

I WENT ON out without waiting for an answer. I felt a little shaky in the knees. But I'd found my boy and I'd set the stage for the next step. Only it would have to be fast, while Fancy Bradford was still trying to make up his mind about me.

I got in my rented Caddy and drove off. When I was about a block away, another car pulled from the curb. I tried a change of pace and it matched me. I grinned to myself and ignored it after that.

There were a few night-clubs on the Strip that had smart money in them. I remembered them from the

year before. I stopped in at each one and asked a few questions about Fancy. Everybody knew him, but nobody had anything to say. I'd expected that. All I wanted was to have somebody report back that I was asking.

I also asked some questions about another redhead, one with hair the color of red gold. I thought maybe she was Fancy's new girl friend. But nobody knew anything about her either. I got the impression they were telling the truth about her, and that puzzled me.

I turned and went back up the Strip. When I hit Beverly Hills, I cut over to Wilshire, making sure I didn't lose the guy following me. Then I went straight out Wilshire to Santa Monica. I stopped at the police station. The other car parked a block behind me and stayed there as I went inside.

I asked for Lieutenant Blair Little. He was the guy who'd questioned me the night before. They kept me waiting for a few minutes, then told me where to find him. I went back to his office.

"Decided to come in and confess?" he asked.

"I never confess on Saturdays," I said. "I had a great-grandfather who was a Seventh Day Adventist. You just made me feel so much at home that I had to come back."

He eyed me steadily. "Sure. What do you want, March?"

"Sherry Azana's things," I said. "You still got them around?"

"You think I take them home for my kids?" he asked sourly. "Why do you want to know?"

"Can I look at them?"

"Why?" he asked again.

"You know how it is," I said. "When you're in the business you can't stop thinking. Maybe I'll get an idea."

He grunted something under his breath, but he got up and led the way into the lab. In a minute, I was looking at all that was left of a girl everybody had thought would talk: Her clothes, all of them expensive. Her purse, with the usual assortment of powder and lipstick and perfume. Again, all expensive. A wallet with several hundred dollars in it. Some keys. Three rings, two of them with diamonds big enough to be searchlights, the other with an emerald. A watch with small diamonds set all around it. I turned the watch over. On the back of it there was some small engraving. "It took Sherry's fancy." I was willing to bet a guy named Fancy Bradford had once thought that was real clever.

When the lieutenant wasn't looking, I palmed the watch. Then I pushed the rest of the stuff back toward the lab man. "Nothing there," I said.

"What were you expecting to find?" he asked as he walked out.

"A clue," I answered. "You know, 'Quick, Watson, the needle'—and all that sort of thing."

He grunted something under his breath again.

"You been looking into any other

suspects?" I asked him. "Or are you just sticking to me?"

"We had about ten of them in this morning," he said. "All of them with alibis and high-priced lawyers following on their heels. You know, one of them might fit the description you gave. I thought about it later. I think we'll invite him over again and have you take a look at him."

"Yeah?" I said without much interest.

"He had an alibi, too, but maybe it could be worked on if you recognize him. His name is Fancy Bradford."

"Fancy Bradford?" I said as if I'd never heard it before. "You know, Lieutenant, if anyone pinned a name like that on me, I wouldn't wait for the State to gas me—I'd do it myself. . . . Tell me something else, Lieutenant."

"That's all I'm here for," he said wearily.

"Did the coroner find any skin scraping under her fingernails?"

His eyes brightened with interest on that, but he wasn't giving anything away.

"Did you find some scratches on yourself?" he asked.

I figured I already had my answer. "Just curious," I said. "Thanks, Lieutenant."

"Wait a minute, March," he said. "Have you been nosing around?"

"Me?" I said innocently. "I've just been out soaking up some of this California atmosphere."

He had a short struggle with himself. "Look, March," he said finally, "I'll level with you. I think you're pretty much out of the woods. If you're talking about what I think you are, I noticed the scratches on Fancy Bradford's face. I didn't forget them. But he's got a damned good alibi, and he's beaten homicide raps before. I think we could prove she scratched him, but that doesn't prove he killed her. If Bradford did the killing, I'll get him—and I'll do it without any amateurs from Colorado mixing into it. Is that clear?"

"I'm just a guy on a vacation," I said. I started down the hall. "I'll see you around, Lieutenant."

"Yeah," he said heavily. "You will."

Outside, I took my time about getting started. When I finally pulled away from the curb, I was amused to see that there were two cars trailing me.

I stopped in town and went into a ten-cent store. When I came out I was carrying a package of children's modeling clay. I'd had the clerk leave it unwrapped in hopes that maybe the tails could see it. It would give them something to think about.

I went straight back to my bungalow at the hotel, and took off my coat. I got the shoulder holster out of my suitcase and strapped it on. I picked up the .38 and slipped it in the holster. Then I put my coat back on. I started playing with the modeling clay and waiting.

I didn't have long to wait. It was only about five minutes before there was a knock on the door.

"Come in," I said.

The door opened and they came in fast: Lance Harker and Barry Alfama. Both of them had their guns out as they stepped through the door.

"Make it easy on yourself," Lance Harker said. His voice was tight and there was an eager look in his eyes. I was careful not to make any sudden moves.

The short guy was staring at my hands. "Look, Lance," he said. "The guy's making dolls. You think he's blown his oats?"

"It won't make any difference now," Lance said. He came across the room, walking carefully. He patted me again and found the gun. He slipped it in his pocket. "Let's go, March."

"Where?" I said.

"We're going to show you the sights," he said. He prodded me with the gun. "Move."

The three of us left the bungalow as chummy as an egg with three yolks. The guns vanished into their pockets as soon as we stepped outside, but Lance was walking so close to me I could still feel the gunbarrel.

Out on the street we climbed into their car, Lance and me in the back, the short guy in front. The gun came back into the open as the car pulled away.

I couldn't twist around to see if my other tail was still on the job. I hoped he was, and let it go at that. Neither of Fancy's boys showed any desire to be chatty as we headed down Wilshire, so I let it ride. Their conversation was likely to be limited, anyway.

It took us about forty minutes to reach the store on the Strip. When we parked, Lance prodded me with the gun again.

"Outside, sucker," he said.

I got out, and we went into the store. As we crossed the sidewalk, I caught a glimpse of someone jumping out of a car behind us and running into a drugstore. But I couldn't tell whether it meant anything for me or was just a guy with a headache.

We marched through the store and up to the office floor. The short guy opened it and stepped inside. I hesitated, and Lance belted me lightly across the back of the neck with the gun. I stumbled into the door-jamb, then got my balance and walked inside. Lance followed me in and circled around to one side. Fancy

Bradford sat behind the desk, looking at me. This time he wasn't grinning.

"This time he was loaded, boss," Lance said. He reached over and flipped back my coat to show the empty holster.

"If you wanted to see me," I said, "why didn't you just phone? I told you I don't like to be pushed around."

"You'll be pushed more," he said. "I thought I told you to keep your nose clean. The minute you were out of here you started asking questions about me. Then you went running to the cops again."

"Just to get you a present," I said. I reached in my pocket and took out the watch. I tossed it to him. "I thought maybe you'd like this back."

Fancy looked at the watch and put it down on the desk. "Where'd you get it?"

"From the cops—without their permission. I thought you'd like it as a keepsake."

He pushed the watch with his finger. "What are you up to, March? You trying to frame me?"

"I don't have to frame you," I said. "You did it." I started to go over to sit down in the chair.

"Stay where you are," he said. "You ain't going nowhere. I was willing to let you go, March, but you had to keep shoving. You're the only witness against me and I'm going to make you wish the frame on you had stuck."

"The way you did with Sherry?" I asked.

"Not with the knife," he said. "I cut her throat because I didn't want any noise. Then the bitch had to scream. But we won't treat you that way; I don't want lousy cop blood all over my place."

"Why don't you just keep talking," I said, "and you could bore me to death. It would be the perfect murder."

"Let me work on him a little, boss," Lance said. He sounded eager, but I'd already guessed he loved his work. "He talks too smart."

"Go ahead," Fancy said, "but make it fast. The quicker we get a dead witness, the better I'll like it."

The tall gunman moved in on me. I watched him carefully.

The barrel of his gun was a blue blur as he swung it at me. I tried to roll a little with it as it hit my jaw. But it still made my teeth ache and knocked me back a couple of steps. I felt a spurt of blood down my chin.

I tried to take a quick look around. Maybe the next one would do it.

He was starting to enjoy himself. His eyes were getting a little feverish and he licked his lips as he took another step toward me. He swung the gun again. It was meant for my eyes, but I ducked a little and it caught me

on the forehead. I felt the gunsight scrape off another patch of skin. I didn't have to fake any staggering. The blow was hard enough to knock me all the way back. The edge of the chair smacked the back of my legs and I flopped into it. I was never so glad to sit down in my life.

"You see, boss?" Lance said thickly. "He's another guy that talks tough, but is chicken when it comes to the real thing. . . . Come on. Get up. I don't want to spoil the boss's good chair."

The room had stopped spinning and I could see him again. I took a good look.

"That would be tough," I said. I dropped my hand, then raised the derringer I'd hidden in the chair when I was there earlier. I pulled the trigger. The nastiness was suddenly gone from his face and there was blood in its place. It looked better that way.

I SWIVELLED the gun and pulled the trigger again. The little guy had been lifting his own gun, but he suddenly dropped it and grabbed at his belly. I turned my attention to Fancy.

He was fast, I'll say that much for him. He had a gun halfway out of the drawer in his desk. I put the third bullet in the desk about two inches in front of him.

"Drop it," I said. "I've got a fourth bullet in this, but I want to save you for that gas chamber."

He dropped the gun back in the drawer.

The door opened and Lieutenant Little came in. There were three county cops with him.

"Where the hell were you?" I said. "Did you have to stay out there playing patty-cake when that lug was beating me up?"

"We didn't want to interfere with your plan, and of course you neglected to tell me what it was," he said. He gave me a nasty grin. That's the thanks you get for helping a cop. "We heard Fancy confess he killed the girl, but we thought he might talk some more."

Fancy Bradford looked even sicker at that. "You couldn't have heard me," he said. "This is a soundproof room."

"It's soundproof when the door is closed," I told him. "But when I came in, I stuck a healthy wad of clay on the jamb so the door wouldn't close. I thought the lieutenant was following; and you know how a cop is when he spots a partly open door. He's got to listen."

Lieutenant Little walked around and snapped a pair of cuffs on Fancy. "This is a pleasure," he said.

I stood up and mopped some of the blood off my face. "You ought to

have enough now," I said. "I can identify him. You'll have the skin scrapings, and his confession. Then, there on his desk, is the watch he once gave Sherry."

The lieutenant looked startled when he saw it. "Where'd that come from?" he asked. "That was in the lab."

"He must have lifted it when he was there this morning," I said. "The jury shouldn't find that hard to believe. He was afraid that would pin him to her even more. But, Lieutenant, you ought to put some burglar-alarm around the station. Or hire a good cop to keep an eye on things. . . . I'll see you around."

"Don't bother," he said sourly. "The quicker you go back to Denver, the better I'll like it. We may work a little slower here, but we like it."

"Want me to leave right now?"

"No," he said. "You know damn well you can't. You'll have to appear for a hearing on these two stiff. It was self-defense, but there'll have to be a hearing anyway. And you're a witness, don't forget."

"Then I'll see you around," I said with a grin as I left.

It was beginning to get dark when I reached my hotel again. I was walking toward my bungalow, wondering about the one part of the puzzle that still bothered me.

"Hello," a voice said. "What happened to you yesterday?"

It was the other redhead—the one in the Bikini suit. Now she was wearing a dress, but it only covered up; it didn't conceal. She was standing in

the doorway of the bungalow next to mine—the one in between mine and the end bungalow, where I'd seen her the day before.

"Aren't you staying in that bungalow?" I asked, pointing to the end one.

She looked blank for a minute, then laughed. "I was just looking at that one to see if I liked it better than this. The maid had left the door open. Didn't I mention that?"

"No, you didn't," I said.

"You promised to come back and tell me about the scream," she said. "What happened?"

I looked to see if she was joking. She didn't seem to be. "I'm Milo March," I said.

She thought I was just introducing myself. "I'm Joyce Tallman," she said.

"Don't you ever read the newspapers?" I asked.

She shook her head. The red-gold hair danced on her bare shoulders. "Not when I'm on a vacation," she said. "Did I miss something?"

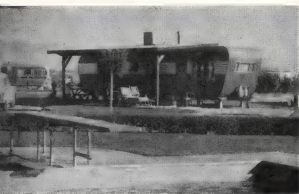
I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Not very much," I said. "I'll tell you about it, if you'll join me in a drink."

"I'd love to," she said.

Later that night, I thought I heard another scream. Maybe it was only the wind in the palm trees, but it sounded like a woman. But I didn't bother to go out to investigate. There was one redhead in my room, and she was very much alive. I didn't see any point in going out and maybe ending up with another dead one.



Let's live in a TRAILER!



Biggest problem with a trailer is finding a place to park it, but new trailer parks are being built at a rate of nearly 1000 per year.

BY THE END OF THIS SUMMER more than 2,000,000 people will be living in trailers, and wishing—if you believe everything they have to say—that they'd never lived any place else. Which prompted comedian Herb Shriner (who is the proud owner of a trailer himself) to remark quietly:

"It's getting everybody. Why, only the other day I saw a house trailer right in the heart of New York City. I guess it was a good idea, because it gave the owner a place to live while he was looking for a place to park."

Actually, if you look at every facet of trailer life, the conversion of Mr. Jones to living in a moving van with windows lies in the discovery of a newly-found freedom to move around when he feels like it. When you live in a trailer, you can say, "There's never a dull moment—" and mean it!

Trailer life used to be a transient affair. Vacation-bound; following the sun, or what have you, the family trailer used to tear across the country like Harry James on a one-night, town-storming hop. Today's statistics reveal that a trailer's average length of stay in any one spot is 14 months.

Still, it's a fact that this form of living brings out

Almost two million
Americans are doing it,
and they can give you
some wonderful reasons why
they think it's
paradise on wheels.

■ BY MICHAEL SHERIDAN



For the serviceman with a family, a trailer is a castle. It can follow him wherever his orders and duty decide to send him.



Natural and man-made landscaping give many trailer yards a beauty unmatched even by permanent homesites, in luxury suburban regions.



Pianos are not standard trailer equipment, but spinets are rare unusual, and one pianist even squeezed in her concert grand.



Picture windows and swimming pools? Sure. Many Florida and California parks have the latter, and big windows are in almost all the newer trailers.

the gypsy streak in even the most roots-loving citizen, and whether he wants to take advantage of the trait or not, it has contributed much to the present popularity of trailer life. Currently, more than one per cent of the nation's 62,200,000 drivers own and operate a trailer.

All of this isn't hard to fathom when you know that mobility is a basic concept in American life. From the days of the first settlements west of the Alleghenies, through the gold-rush and the railroad-construction towns, down to today's pipeline workers and builders of atomic energy plants, American progress has been founded on the movement of whole communities of families.

Because trailer living enables all types of workers to stay on the job, and at the same time enjoy normal lives with their families, it has passed the stage when the home-on-wheels was merely a high-priced toy of vacationists, or a low-priced roof for the old, the retired, and the lonely.

At Aiken, South Carolina, where the huge Savannah River project is being built and developed by the Atomic Energy Commission, trailer coaches were the first housing established. It is estimated that, at peak, there may be nearly 10,000 homes at this H-bomb project.

Today you don't have to be financially independent to live in a mobile home. Out of the 2,000,000-odd persons who will live in some 700,000 trailers by late summer of 1953, a fourth still will be wage-earners: they will be trailerites on the move to wherever their jobs take them.

An outstanding example of these mobile occupations is the construction of the numerous oil and gas pipelines which crisscross the country. Half the men working on the first natural-gas line ever to penetrate New England followed it up from the Southwest, and most of them brought their mobile homes right along with them.

"All right," you say, "so these people follow their work. What about those that just follow the good weather? Maybe I'm in that group, and maybe I'm just around the corner from retirement. What I want to know is not only what this jacked-up dream will give me, but what will it cost me? And how will I like trailer life?"

Here are the answers:

Trailer living, apart from allowing you to live where you want *when* you want, pares the budget. Typical of reported economies is the experience of a retired couple in a New England trailer park, who compare their expenses in a mobile home with those in the six-room house they sold when they retired. The costs per year:

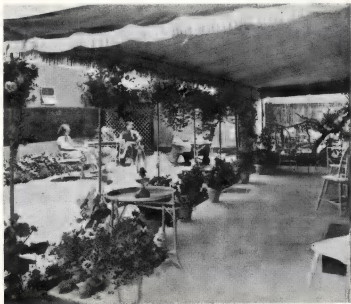
	House	Trailer
Paint	\$100	\$90.00
Fuel	216	57.00
Cooking gas.....	72 to 84	24.00
Total year cost	\$388 to 400	\$81.00

A better appreciation of the savings effected in trailer living, however, can be seen when we compare the cost of trailer living to that of owning a house. A good modern trailer will last a minimum of fifteen years with reasonable treatment. Those bought fifteen years ago, for the most part, still are in regular use, and the ones being turned out today are far superior to those earlier efforts.

savings, they admit, are in outside entertainment. They pick trailer parks that have a clubhouse, movies, outdoor games. At-home entertainment is also at a minimum, because trailerites invariably go "Dutch" on parties, dinners and card games. Another saving: wardrobes. Trailer-park clothes disregard all fashion trends.

Feminine advantage to trailer life: "I can clean my whole house in less than one hour." Masculine note: "Instead of repairing one damned thing after another every week-end of the year, I can go fishing."

Okay, you say, let's go look at a trailer.



In many Florida and California trailer parks, professional planning includes concrete patios, grassy courts with attractive shrubbery and facilities to erect a spacious canopy.

Based on the life of the average house, though, how does this stack up on a dollar-to-dollar basis? Well, figuring that the average trailer costs \$3,500, and the average house (at least a fairly good one) costs in the neighborhood of \$15,000, a family could own four trailers in a sixty-year span. And it's doubtful if the modern house, even in the \$15,000 range, would stand up for more than half a century.

The New England couple mentioned above live comfortably on \$150 a month, which includes an average \$25-a-month rent for trailer space, including electricity. Travel, of course, is a separate item. Their greatest

They come in all sizes, colors and prices, and they sprout fancy names. Here are a few of the well-known ones: Liberty, Travelite, Prairie Schooner, Colonial, New Moon, Schult, Kozy Coach, Continental, Pontiac, American, Spartan, Landola, Streamlite, and about a hundred others. The best way to buy a trailer is not to look for someone who has lived in one, but to find ten people who've lived in ten different ones. Each has an advantage over the others, and each a disadvantage. Just like cars—you'll have to judge finally for yourself.

What you decide first is how much you want to spend. A good new trailer costs \$100 to \$135 a foot. But

don't get excited; there aren't any two-foot trailers. They start at 16 feet and go all the way to 42 feet. They sleep four to six people, and the price for a livable, comfortable mobile home ranges from approximately \$1,600 to \$5,000, with the average about \$3,500. The latter figure embraces both the ultimate in livability, and the maximum the average American family spends when buying a trailer.

Above \$3,500, you get into the luxury class, and the sky is the limit. Let Uncle Joe leave you a small fortune, and you can act like a Rockefeller. Take, for instance, the Liberty. This is a de-luxe, double-decker model. On the road it looks like any other trailer, but once arrived at the park you press a button and, via hydraulic lifts, the top rises. In an hour you have two extra bedrooms, an upstairs bathroom, and an outside stairway that reaches the second floor.

To say nothing of a veranda running the whole length of this portable palace on wheels. The cost: a mere \$15,000.

One thing is certain: irrespective of the number in your family, you'll buy a long coach, because that's the trend. So far, this year, 75 per cent of the mobile homes sold were 30 feet long or longer, as compared with only 17 per cent at this latter length five years ago.

Do you have to pay cash for your trailer? The answer is no—

A recent bank survey shows that trailer owners are good credit risks. Of 122 banks answering a questionnaire of the Trailer Coach Manufacturers Association, 97 per cent reported their experience with trailer installment loans was "good, or better." The loss ratio was less than 1 per cent, with gross outstanding trailer loans of \$200,000,000, and the average contract \$1,860.

So chances are that your request to finance a new trailer for a third down, with monthly payments of about \$100, will be eagerly granted. Let's figure now that you are ready to spend \$2500 to \$3500 on a trailer. What will you get?

This: A completely furnished home, not just an unfurnished shell. You get a kitchen, a bathroom (if not a regular tub, at least a shower), a master bedroom and a living-room. At night (or even in the middle of the afternoon, if you're that relaxed) the living-room turns into an extra bedroom. And doors at either end of the kitchen will restrict the odors of cooking, the clatter of dishes, the sound of your wife's favorite radio program.

Trailers have come a long way from the original made-over buses and vans of a few years ago. Interior decoration now combines handsome ap-

pearance with labor-saving design. Paneling eliminates the task of annual painting or wallpapering. There is no old-fashioned, dust-catching woodwork, and lighting is mostly indirect. Wall lamps add to reading enjoyment.

Many trailers have wall-to-wall carpeting; all have a choice of either double or twin beds. The living-room couch opens to sleep two. In trailers for six people, the dinette, as part of the kitchen, has bunks that open up into two more comfortable beds.

DESPITE their compactness, trailers today are so skillfully designed that they frequently have more *usable* space than many a modern apartment. In fact, trailer manufacturers boast that their products compare favorably to a typical big-city apartment, a hotel suite or a floor, and that a trailer actually exceeds the square footage of any rental that often is four times the price.

As one who has lived in a trailer, the writer knows that trailers are designed to conserve space rather than to spread it. Thus, in a 30-foot trailer, encompassing some 240 square feet of floor space, you get the same benefits, from a sleeping point of view, as you would in any 9x15-foot master bedroom. All you sacrifice in a trailer is space to pace up and down—and you have the whole outdoors for that.

Your wardrobe closets are identical with those in an apartment; your chests of drawers, your end tables, your coffee tables, your book shelves—everything is there except idle or useless space in which to saunter around. In a trailer bedroom, you can read in bed or go to sleep; but you can't walk the floor, or at least not far in any one direction.

All trailers are eight feet wide, so that your over-all square footage naturally depends on the length of your trailer. While you can't put a grand piano into one (although the press recently carried the story of a concert pianist who did), you can, as many trailerites have done, include a small upright in your furnishings. The thing to remember is that, while you are sacrificing indoor space, you also are enlarging your exterior space; and, for people who hate to be shut up in a tiny apartment, this lure of outer space in which to breathe and move around is an inescapable one.

Weather permitting, the mere existence of an outdoor veranda of some 300 square feet (average) provides many advantages, including outdoor dining area, entertaining space, play space, that will be equal to that found in many small, medium-priced houses, and larger than that obtainable in some of the much-publicized postwar housing developments.

On the subject of space, the first thing a wife asks a trailer dealer is how many feet of storage space she will have, and this answer naturally has to vary. In the hundreds of different types of trailers, the space varies because no two of them are apt to be alike. But there is storage beneath beds, over and under sinks, in the television cabinet, above stoves, behind and under sofas—wherever there's room and where the addition of the extra storage space won't radically change the design of the coach.

Whatever the space, it has to be conserved; there is no room for a bride's 160-piece Haviland china set or a gentleman's thirty suits of clothes. Yet few trailerites have been known to kick about the lack of space, at the same time that they dress well, live well, and entertain friends who come in for dinner or bridge.

Probably nowhere is the space-saving ingenuity of trailer-coach designers more apparent than in the facilities for eating. A lounge chair unfolds to form a dining-table for eight; a corner cabinet becomes a table merely by extension of the front and insertion of leaves stored in a special compartment of the cabinet; a desk can be expanded to a 52-inch dining-table, with leaves stored in a top drawer. All these tables, you understand, are not in one trailer, but there is that kind of choice.

THERE are so many interesting things to do inside a trailer that you may be irked at having to rush out at all hours to use community bathrooms in the trailer park. Fully equipped bathrooms in many coaches occupy as little as 48 by 54 inches, and have separate shower stalls or baths (all right, so you have to bend your legs a little if you're a bath-tub guy). That's in addition to the lavatory, toilet, clothes-hamper, storage facilities for towels and linens, medicine-chests, and fresh-air vents.

Are you the "isn't it chilly?" (even in Florida) type? Well, don't worry. Heating equipment is as modern as the rest of the trailer, all thermostatically-controlled. Some models boast forced air or radiant heating in the floors. Powerful, quiet blower fans distribute heat evenly during winter months and cool the trailer in summer, changing the air as much as eight to ten times an hour.

Kitchen-wise, the modern mobile home has everything from a good stove to an excellent refrigerator. And if you buy a model in the near-luxury class you'll get an electric dishwasher and garbage disposal unit to lessen cooking chores. (This writer's opinion: trailerites eat better than owners of larger homes. There is less room to cook in, perhaps, but more

time to do it, and the K.P. is both simple and speedy.)

But, you say, "You think I'm crazy putting out \$5000 for a new trailer? Not me, no sirree—not when I can get a used one for a third the price! Me for a second-hand trailer, one that's been broken in."

That's a good phrase—"broken in;" just be sure it isn't "broken up." Unlike a car, you don't see the flaws in a second-hand trailer. If a car's engine isn't good, you turn away; if a trailer's bedroom needs new box springs, well—that's a simple matter.

It goes deeper than that, however. A man in Sargeant Bluff, Iowa, bought a trailer in apparently good condition. He drove it away in the evening from the used-trailer lot. Next morning, in the blistering sun, it creaked and rattled from end to end. It was like pulling a crate of coconuts behind him—and Iowa isn't an island in the South Seas.

What had happened was this: the previous owner had been caught in flood country; the trailer had been immersed for three days. Only a new paneling job throughout would make it habitable.

Here are some hints in picking a used trailer: examine it carefully inside and out. Find out: are wooden floor beams clean and free from signs of rot? Does the stove work? How old is the refrigerator? How is the wiring? Do the windows and air vents open and close properly? Is every piece of furniture, movable and built-in, in good shape? Is the undercarriage straight?

You can find out these things by buying your trailer with the help of a veteran trailerite, at a recognized dealer's or at a trailer park, and where a more-than-minute examination on your part is agreeable to the seller. If it isn't, don't buy.

THINGS to look for: Defective plumbing connections. Corroded or bent piping. Faulty door locks. Oven doors that won't close. Wood discoloration in paneling (which indicates water leakage). Condition of spring and spring shackles, and trailer tires and hubs. Remember, too, that the trailer can have been swiped by another car, or might have hit a building. Examine the outer body-work with care.

Best tip of all: take your prospective purchase for a long pull on the road, with you at the wheel of your own car, and see how it tows. If the dealer refuses to let you do that, shop somewhere else. And be sure to get the age and history of the trailer; it may have been on the road since birth, engaged in mountain-climbing, river-crossing and ditch-jumping. Or it may have sat through sun and storm, without

protection, for ten years. Both ways, it didn't come out unscathed, and unlike a car, has too many delicate features to stand up under either elements or ill-care.

Now that you're the proud owner of a new or used trailer, your next thought is for a spot to park it. You've heard all sorts of things about trailer parks. They're terrific, they stink; they're cheap, they charge an arm and a leg. There aren't enough of them.

HERE are some of the facts: California leads the field with the most and best trailer parks. Reason: because trailering can be a year-round pleasure there, and travel-loving Californians took the mobile home into their hearts years ago, before anyone else did. Florida, because of the natural advantage of its climate, comes next, and after that Arizona.

In those three States alone there probably are some 3000 trailer parks, ranging from the purely comfortable to the ultra luxurious. Many have outdoor swimming pools, the last word in club-houses and restaurants, and game courts. Rates vary from \$15 to \$100 a month, with \$40 a good average. Overnight stays in most of the less luxurious parks are just \$1.

In the beginning, trailer parks were dirty, dusty and noisy. The well-kept lawn, the flowering bushes, the streamlined administration buildings, the post-office and first-aid buildings, the convenient grocery stores, the newspaper stands—these were something unheard-of.

A great part of the credit for the strides made must go to the Trailer Coach Manufacturers Association, which has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on a park inspection program, free architectural service for park builders, and publication of its Trailer Park Guide.

Even now, the Association is all too aware of the dearth of good parks in Maine, where only seven cities have trailer-parking facilities. Mississippi is not much better off, with only nine; or Nevada with eight, Tennessee with six, New Hampshire with five; North Dakota with two, and Vermont with one.

Nevertheless, in the alert eyes of the TCMA, these are sorry figures compared to the 140 communities in California, the 110 in Florida, the 80-odd in Texas. While there can be a dozen or more approved parks in each community, the need for greater distribution across the nation.

If you are thinking of buying a trailer, don't worry—for this situation is being remedied rapidly. While good trailer parks don't sprout up like wild mushrooms wherever there is a view, a gas station or spot of water,

there are new ones being built at the rate of nearly 1000 per year.

A step in the right direction—bigger, better and more plentiful trailer parks—is the existence in Melbourne, Florida, of a park that now is serving as an experimental laboratory for the study of all aspects of trailering.

A three-year program, sponsored by about 100 industrial firms, and conducted by the Industrial Relations Center of the University of Chicago, will gather facts on trailer-dwellers' requirements and expenses. This information will help set standards for future planning, building and improvements. Thus the new parks will reflect every detail of the mobile-home owner's needs.

One of the questions every would-be trailer owner asks is, "How hard is it to drive the things?" Not hard, if you're a good driver to begin with and don't take your eyes off the road. The car with a trailer behind it mustn't have such distractions as a television set, a telephone, or a gabby wife.

In order to keep a woman in her place—which is up front enjoying the ride—trailer owners use the highly efficient trailer-transport firms that exist all over the nation. For a nominal fee, these latter will move your home on wheels anywhere you say. You don't have to have a gabby wife to make this service desirable; you only have to be lazy and affluent enough to afford the extra ten-to-twelve cents a mile it costs to have someone else move your trailer to its new location, while you proceed separately at your leisure.

ACTUALLY, the idea of someone else delivering your trailer to a new-found paradise is ideal. Your trip between the two points is enjoyable, you can drop in on friends and out-of-the-way eating places, or take in shows and side trips to scenic wonders. All of this, knowing that when you arrive at the Shangri-La Trailer Haven, in Atibet, California, your mobile home already will be jacked up and in full running order.

For the hardy driver who wants to live in his trailer and drive it, too, here are some useful pointers.

You're pulling a lot of weight, and you can't start off like a cannon ball. First, you must learn that you'll spend most of your time on the road in first and second, and you'll use less "high" than ever before in your life.

Most of your worries will involve your brakes. You have two sets: your car brakes, which won't stop the trailer, and your trailer brakes, which are either hydraulic or electric.

On the car's steering column you will have a control for the latter. You apply the trailer brakes, first;

otherwise, if you reverse the procedure, the trailer will jackknife. A quick on-and-off movement, rather than hard continuous application, is preferable. Best system of all is to outfit your car and trailer with combined brakes, so that the trailer's brakes start to operate before the car's take hold.

Trickiest part of trailer driving is backing up. Driving straight ahead and stopping is a cinch. In backing up, you have to remember that the effect of the steering wheel is reversed. To back to the right, you must swing the wheel to the left. Swing too wide, and the trailer will jackknife.

BASIC rule of the road is *Keep to the Right*. Approach traffic lights slowly and try to minimize the number of stops. Keep your gas tank well filled—dragging several tons of bed and board behind you is a fuel-hungry affair. And remember, too, that mountainous country absorbs the water in the radiator like a sponge.

Other hints:

Observe all posted speeds and give adequate signals when turning or stopping, or allowing others to pass.

In passing other vehicles, allow ample room before cutting back to the right lane.

When stopping, make certain that the ground is solid before pulling off the road.

Most important of all before taking to the road is to familiarize yourself with all existing State laws regarding over-length permits, travel restrictions, speeds, equipment and license requirements. You'll find all the answers to those questions in the 1953 edition of the Official Trailer Park Guide.

For instance, you'll find that in States which restrict the over-length of car, combined with trailer, special permits are obtainable to take care of the infringement.

In Delaware, for example, if you're four inches beyond 60 feet, that'll nick your vacation or retirement budget for two bucks in cash, and a \$500 bond. Maryland asks for, and gets, a sawbuck. Kansas is greedy, demands \$5000 liability insurance. Ohio tops Kansas by requiring a \$10,000 surety bond. In all cases, be it a buck or a bond, permits are granted by writing beforehand. West Virginia, content with a single dollar, grabs the dough at the door.

Now let's take a look at what happens at the trailer park. First of all, you've made your reservations in advance and are expected. You've done that because some trailer parks have space for only fifteen trailers; others for over a hundred. Either type might be filled.

You register at the office upon arrival, pay the rent in advance. Park

attendants will park your trailer (by jeep in the better parks), jack it up, and connect light, water and gas. The gas is from your own butane tanks. They will give you a plan of the park, a set of rules, and will tell you a little about the wonderful people who came for a week-end five years ago and haven't budgeted since.

In less than an hour, your home is working, and alive with light. And you can stay there for the rest of your life, if (a) you pay your rent and utilities on time, and (b) are not drunk or disorderly. But if you have picked a trailer park that specifies no pets (and this includes kids!), and unexpectedly you become parents, or pick up a stray coyote on a near-by trail, you are banished forevermore.

Important thought: if you have either babies or beasts, find out beforehand whether the park allows them. The older, retired folk have had their fill of both, and sometimes pick their last paradise for solitude—not in order to listen to the babel of childish laughter and animals suffering from sex and insomnia.

Otherwise the rules are about the same as in any nice residential district: Don't disturb the peace. Don't hang the wash out on your doorstep. Don't scatter the day's garbage blithely from the window. And don't litter the public washroom with old Sears-Roebuck catalogues, sucker mail, or last month's magazines.

Fun or fizzle, living in a trailer can be one or the other. It all depends on you. Whether you adopt a mobile home for adventure or relaxation, for hibernation or exploration, or merely as a means of cutting down the overhead, you should, if you are assailed by any doubts whatsoever of the efficacy of living in this fashion, ask yourself a number of questions.

For instance, "Now that I know a little of what trailer life can give me, what *can't* it give me?" Here are some of the answers:

(1) *You Do Not Have any Room for Hobbies*. You can't go in for power lathes, a workshop, tinkering with metal, refinishing furniture. On the other hand, you can paint, draw, collect stamps, read, and listen to good music to your heart's content. (But you won't be able to build up a big collection of phonograph records.)

(2) *You Do Not Have Space to Be Untidy*. Trailers are spacious only for people used to living with a minimum of worldly possessions. There is no room for accumulation of any sort. No sentimental possessions or anything except what you absolutely need for daily living. If you leave magazines and books, or an airplane model, around the living-quarters, it must be cleared away to make up beds for those who sleep in the living-room.

In a house, if you don't feel like making beds, you can close the doors on the bedrooms and still receive company. In a mobile home, if you have people sleeping in the living-room or dinette, everything must be put away at once so there is enough room to move around.

(3) *You Have to Like Modern, Functional and Built-In Furniture*. There's no room for an old mahogany rocking-chair—or other antiquated family heirloom. Your upholstered pieces have to turn into beds, your cabinets and desks into dining space. Everything has to be designed to take the least possible space and to have the straightest and least complex lines.

(4) *You Don't Have As Much Privacy*. If you want to growl, or if you just feel like taking a nap, or simply want to be alone, Garbo-fashion, that's not always easy to do in a trailer. You either can go outside and take a walk, or close the tiny bedroom door—and hear practically everything going on elsewhere in the trailer. But if you learn to live like the average trailerite, chances are you'll be up with the rest of 'em, and go to sleep when they go to sleep. Lights out in a trailer park occur with the regularity of falling dusk—anywhere from 10 P.M. to 11 P.M.—television notwithstanding.

On the credit side, some of the things you *don't* get are advantageous:

No knocks on the wall from neighbors who don't like your choice of a radio or television program.

No major household repairs.

No more elaborate formal parties—there just isn't the space.

No more neighbors you don't like but must endure because they own the house next door.

No problem now, too, is the lack of air in the small apartment. If it's hot, it's hot—but you can always get whatever air there is without walking down five flights to sit on the front stoop.

Out, too, are other people's bugs. In today's modern trailer park, the exterminator would ply a sorry trade.

Furthermore, you can go where the best school facilities exist for your kids. You can follow your favorite sport, from fishing to skeet-shooting. You can live in a whale of a country or ocean estate instead of in a sardine-packed city walk-up. You can be near the job that fits you best.

Whichever way you look at the whole trailer-living picture, one thing is certain. The advent of the home on wheels is hardly a passing phase, and there are figures to prove that. Only twenty-three years old, the trailer industry grossed \$1,000,000 in 1930. Last year, trailer sales reached \$319,917,900.

It seems to be catching on. •



MOUNTAIN MAN

It hurt, his wife
wanting another man, but
it left him no choice.
He was a mountain man.

• By TOM ROAN

A WHIFFPOORWILL'S CALL floated through the settling twilight, coming up the westward slope of the great ridge where a man leaned against the tall pine tree. Head cocked to one side, he weighed every note of the call, his green eyes probing the pools of shadows. In the blue denim garb of a mountain man, he was as still as the pine itself. On the crook of the left arm rested a rifle. Stabbed in either side of his waistband were large old-fashioned five-shooters, weapons that kept the last of the



Pardons out of the grave or the penitentiary.

Putting a small bone in his mouth, Rube Pardon sent out his own particular call, the low gobble of a wild turkey, drifting through the shadows. He waited a few minutes as a real gobbler would, then sent out the call a second time. He stood silent and still, until a low whistle sounded on up the ridge, and behind it there trailed the voice of a woman, calling to her dogs.

Rube Pardon could see her in his thoughts. She was standing in the doorway of the split-plank lean-to at the rear side of a long log house while she pitched chunks of corn-pone to the evil-tempered hounds. Only high-mountain folk might have guessed there was something in the wind, in the gathering dusk of this late-September night.

He waited a little longer, squatting twice to peer along the slopes under the trees.

Then, with an effortless surge he moved on, a tall lean shadow in the shadows, so noiselessly that even the feeding dogs in the back yard were unaware of his approach. Swinging below the house in a diplane half-circle, he came to a halt forty yards beyond it under the dark overhang of a corncrib at the side of an old barn.

A few minutes later she appeared, a young and pretty thing, less than twenty to his forty-four—a tall, golden-haired woman. Two steps from him she halted. She clasped her hands 'in front of her and turned her eyes to the ground.

He spoke in a low voice.

"Howdy, Lonely."

"Howdy, Rube." There was something like a sigh in her tone.

"Has anybody been round asking for me?"

"No, Rube." Her voice lifted slightly. "They know the ol' mountain's still abuzzing since Sam Brasher went down."

"Then they maybe won't be acoming, Lonely." A flicker of a smile moved his thin lips. "Nobody saw me agoing or acoming. Nobody but them that I'd aimed to have see me—and they ain't going to do no more talking."

"The mountain's been ahearing things, Rube." She stared aimlessly at his feet. "There's been a heap about the foot-tracks in Bud Knight's cornfield, and in the hall of Parley Smith's barn—the biggest tracks ever seen in the valley, 'twas said."

"The wisp of a smile flicked again. "I buried his shoes when I was done with them. Sam Brasher, I reckon, had the biggest damn feet in Virginia."

"Pa was a big man." She nodded slightly. "Six feet two, and 242, just in his socks and drawers."

"Well, now!" he frowned. "Ain't you coming even close enough for me to kiss you?"

"I'm scared, Rube!" Her voice trembled and tears welled up in her deep blue eyes. "It—it's awful hard at times on a girl married to a gun-shooting man."

"But you're my woman, an' I'm your man, Lonely." His voice was low, infinitely gentle, but it was untouched by sympathy. "For better or for worse," the preacher said. Look now, do you always have to stand with your head bowed down?"

"There—there's somethin' about a gun-shooting man, Rube, that makes a woman stand with her head bowed down."

"Maybe now," he intoned, again staring into the far distance, "maybe I'll never have to leave you no more, Lonely."

"It's hard to tell about you, Rube." She was crying quietly, suppressing her sobbing like some wild thing afraid to make a sound. "One day you make a promise. Next day you break it. All my life it seems I ain't seen nothing but blood, and death, and fear. Now there's dead men in the lowlands. Bud Knight, hanging like a saddle on the cross-bars betwixt his plow-handles, his old white mule standing still and asleep in the traces. There was tracks, the talk says, where the gun-shootin' man came out of the woods. There was tracks where he walked quiet and easy through the cornpatch, and the place where he stood to put his ball between Knight's eyes."

"And there was other talk, Rube." Her head remained bowed. "Of—of



how the gun-shooting man's tracks come and went out of the pines back of Parley Smith's barn. They say Parley died one morning at daylight when he stepped in the hallway to feed his mules. They laugh up here about the look of surprise that must've come over his face when he saw a dead man standing there waiting!

"Then there was old Shep Crow, out behind his henhouse, and a ball, they say, square between his eyes. There was blood on the ground, they said, Rube."

She looked up, her eyes swimming. "It was where the killer stood! It was hard on me, not knowing, thinking of you maybe lying in the bushes or the gullies, down and bad hurt, and me not knowing where or how to get to your side like a man's woman should."

"But it was nothing, Lonely." Again there was that slow, hard little smile. "Only the rake of his bill caught me 'cross the arm." He lifted his left hand, a soiled strip of handkerchief showing around the wrist. "Some blood just squirted right out, sorter like one had stuck a hog. I found me a devil's snuffbox growing at the side of the dead log. I split it open and tied it on tight, and the blood stopped. By next day there was no pain or nothing."

"Crow, now, was a sight to see when I finally got my chance to face him alone." The smile flicked. "Caught at his mornin's mornin' with a gun in his hand. He knewed he was gonna be next after Bud and Parley. It was the first time he'd broke cover from the house without his wife glued to his side. Come my dying day I'll still be laughing at him trying to jerk up his pants and fight. Them three will do no more sneaking through the bushes and swearing damn lies in court! They won't be killing off no more mountain folks by hiding quiet as cottonmouth snakes behind hollow logs—with their guns already set and their triggers filed to shoot us down as we pass!"

SILENCE held them for, seemingly, a long time. Four weeks ago he had held her in his arms for the last time. It had been just about this same time in the evening, down on the mountainside. After he was gone she had dropped to her knees, not praying, just hoping.

"Rube," her voice quavered now, "must you go on and on, killing?"

"An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth." His teeth made a grating sound. "They filled your daddy's back full of rifle-balls when he lay down to drink at the spring. When I married you it made me his kin, and a man don't see his kin murdered without doing something about it."

"But see here, Lonely, see here!" He took a quick step toward her. The hand with the bandaged wrist swung up. He caught her lowered chin on the crook of his forefinger, lifting her head, and peering into her tear-filled eyes.

"You just stand and tremble like a leaf. Don't you ever aim to come no closer?"

"Yes, Rube." She rocked against him, her leaden arms going around him, his arms wrapping her to him. "I'm just still scared, I guess."

"All that'll pass, given time." He laughed in a flat little whisper of sound. "Seems I was away a whole year, mostabout."

"**R**ube!" She looked up, something desperate in her eyes. "Tell me truly, do you love me now the same as before you got me?"

"No." He frowned. "Not near so little as then, Lonely. I've loved you more each day until it seems there ain't no room for more; and still I find I love you better each morning than I did the night before."

"You can say such purty things, Rube!" She moved back, holding him at arm's length with her hands against his shoulders as if really to look at him. "If only God hadn't said, 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"True, maybe," he nodded, "but 'way back yonder when the Bible was writ, He maybe just didn't know a damn thing about those fee-grabbing shitepokes that was to come sneaking along pesterin' honest people in these old Virginia mountains."

"And you aim to go on making your moonshine runs, don't you, Rube?" She was looking at him intently, eyes dry now, and searching. "You'll go on just the same as always?"

"It's moon country, Lonely. Pa, Gran'pa and Gran'pa's Pa made it before me. And now that you always draw your Bible on me like a pistol in the dark, Jesus Christ made wine, right in front of a whole passel of people, and didn't have to do it like a varmint on the dodge in the bushes!"

"Let's quit the talk, Rube." She turned to his side, hand on his arm. "Take up your gun and come on in the house. There's supper cooked and on the fire keepin' warm. I've cooked and kept it waiting lots of nights. Last night I dreamed of you standing in the door. All day today I had a strange feeling that you'd soon be coming home."

He picked up the rifle, carrying it loosely in his right hand, muzzle downward. At the long lean-to porch at the front of the house he mounted the four short steps. Just inside the first darkened room he stopped, al-

ways the wary wolf, his right hand tightening on the rifle, the left making a slip of movement toward one of the old-fashioned revolvers in his waistband. His voice was short, crisp.

"Who's that setting in the corner by the window, Lonely?"

"Oh, that!" She forced a laugh that was like a startled little cackle. "Why—why, that's my bust, Rube!"

"Your bust?" His eyes widened.

"Then what the hell you wearing?" "But that one's a clay bust, Rube, like a statue." There was something strained in her stumbling attempt to laugh, and his ear caught it. "Enoch Lee's been making it!"

"Enoch Lee!" Had it not been so dark in the room she might have seen the gripping hand on the rifle turn white, the big knuckles and veins rising. "Back yonder at the end of the war, his great-granddaddy come out of hiding in the bushes and turned black Republican!"

"Lord, Rube!" She drew away from him, trembling inwardly, a chill going up and down her back. "That's been nigh onto eighty-five or ninety years ago!"

"And in eighty-five or ninety years," he nodded, voice tight, throat dry and stiffening, "a rattlesnake, if he lived that long, would only grow more rattles behind the same old button on his tail. I take it Enoch's come home from that school where the Army sent 'im?"

"Yes, Rube," she nodded, "he's come home an artist, a good one, it's said. But he ain't been up here by himself. His sister's come every time. Sally Lee, I mean, Rube! She set on the porch with us. Enoch didn't come inside the house, Rube."

His voice sharpened.

"No?" He looked at her narrowly, lips tight, going white. "Now just what would move you to tell me so quick Enoch Lee didn't come inside? Would there be reason for fear on my part if he had?"

"Rube, what are you trying to say?" She stood well away from him now, her hands lifted, her voice strained. "Shorely now, you ain't getting it in your mind to doubt me?"

"Well—well, no, I reckon I ain't." He scowled. "If I doubted you I guess you wouldn't be standing there. You'd be lying dead on the floor, Lonely. I'm just a careful man."

He stepped back, staring at the thing by the window. "If any other man ever rolled an eyeball at you, I'd put a bullet through your heart... That is—I mean—" he stumbled, "if you didn't come right to me and tell me so I could see him kick and squirm like a dying hog, with my bullets in his guts!"

Illustrated by DAVE STONE

"There's one thing I'll always remember, Lonely—and that is that you didn't want me at the start. And your daddy, Sam Brasher, didn't want me, but he knewed it was him or me, and Sam didn't want to leave you sudden-like. He had his weak spot. Maybe your mammy weakened him. She was purty even when she passed on that winter, the only Brasher to die in bed with shoes off. Seven sons she give Sam, and seven sons she saw die. She said God was smiling at last when you come along, a girl baby to fill a lonely woman's heart. It's queer, still it's purty, the name she give you."

"Rube." His pause gave her a chance. "Are you all right?"

"All right?" He stared at her. "Why, maybe I ain't, come to think of it. I'm blessed with common sense. Sometimes it ain't too good for a man."

"But that's talkin' in a riddle," she whimpered. "You seem so queer to-night, specially since you walked into this room!"

"Well, now, maybe that's right." He turned and looked back at the bust. A last streak of dying twilight focused on it through the window. "A man ain't used to walking in his own house and finding the upper half of his wife looking near-naked, with her fine and purty breasts poked out big as thunder even in clay!"

"It's not like that, Rubel!" Her cry was low and desperate. "You're seeing it wrong. Please let me light the lamp so you can see it better!"

"Light it!" He stepped to a table, laying the rifle on top of it. She hurried to the big fireplace, fumbled along the smoke-stained mantel for a box of wooden matches. She worked in breathless haste and broke two or three matches trying to strike them. When one flared into light she lifted down the old glass-bowled kerosene lamp with its square of red flannel floating in the bottom of the oil. The match touched the chimneyless wick, and a smoky flame wobbled uncertainly upward.

"Now, Rubel!" she said sharply, holding the lamp close. "See, Rubel, it has a dress! The same one I've got on."

"Why, yeah, seems as how it does," he nodded, slowly moving forward. "The collar swings up nigh the throat. But it still ain't decent." His voice thundered in anger. "Damn it, it still shows most all of you."

All at once the big .44's from his waistband filled his hands. Yard-long bursts of flame flashed from the guns, and chunks of clay flew against the wall. The gunfire ended only when he had fired the last cartridge, the hammers clanking on empty shells.

Then he suddenly came to himself, his fury gone as suddenly as it had come. A fire had jumped into being in the fireplace. It was the broken lamp, flung from Lonely's hand as she fell backward in terror onto the wide flagstones of the old hearth, her face so pale in the dancing light that he might have just finished shooting her down.

"Lonely, pore little Lonely!" He slipped the .44's back into his waistband and picked her up tenderly.

"Oh, Rubel!" She was opening her eyes, a strong-willed girl in spite of her beauty that had always seemed so fragile to him. "What have you done?"

"Hell, I only shot the breasts off the damn thing! Come morning, I'll go down the mountainside and kill the one-footed scum who had the guts to make a thing like that out of my wife!"

"No—no, you won't, Rubel!" She twisted free from his arms and stood with her back to the wall. Brasher defiance now filled her eyes in spite of her fear of him. "If you do, then I'll kill myself, and the mountains will be upon you! All the Moon Country will be crying for your blood! God help you when they turn on you!"

"You kind of make it worse, Lonely." He walked back to the table, the gunsmoke trailing him. He picked up the rifle, a weapon rarely a foot beyond his reach. "Only a woman who wanted another man could say them words to her husband."

"Enoch Lee and Sally have been my friends since I was a baby. In these high old mountains you don't forget your friends."

"Now, by God," he laughed, "you speak as if the mountains belong to you!"

"They're powerful close to my heart, Rubel. All my folks are buried in them. Maybe that, to me, makes them sacred ground. Yours are here, too; but somehow I seem to remember my dead a little more—a little bit better—than you do."

"Which," he nodded grimly, the smoke beginning to cloud and bank above him, "ain't denyin' that my words are true. Tonight appearing the time for truth—I've never been too sure of you, Lonely! Once when you was eleven, I told your mammy I was the stud waiting only for the purty filly to grow a little bigger. She looked at me with her big china-blue eyes filled with that Stonewall Jackson fire—'cause she was direct off his line."

"Over my dead body, Rube Pardon!" she said to me. "And when I can't lift a hand to plant a pistol-ball in your brow!" She stole Sam ag'in' me, I think. Maybe they figured I was too old for you. . . .

"Come here, Lonely." It was a command, but it was low-toned. His eyes had strayed to a dark book lying on the table. It had been there the first time he'd ever walked inside this house, an old-fashioned family Bible bound in worn leather. "Your folks put a lot of stock in this. Mine didn't bother so much. Put your hand on that Bible, Lonely!"

"Well?" He glared at her as she stood hesitating. "Your hand on that Bible, I said!" His voice became thunderous again. "If you believe a word in that thing, in God or Hell or Hereafter, let the truth and only the truth come out of you!"

"All right, Rube." Something stiffened her; a small white hand lifted, trembled, and came down, flattening and becoming quiet on the Bible. "What truth do you want me to tell you?"

"Swear to me,"—he stepped back, the muzzle of the rifle an unwavering black eye on her midsection—"swear before God and man here tonight, Lonely, that you've always been true to me, that no man has ever touched you where he shouldn't—"

"That I swear, and gladly, Rubel!" she cut in, smiling up at him. "That, Rube, I swear straight to the face of God!"

"And swear ag'in, Lonely!" His eyes burned. "Swear ag'in that you love only me, and no other!"

"That I—I can't do, Rube." Her hand was still on the Bible. But her smile was gone. Head up, her lips were white and trembling, her eyes strangely like the stars outside in the sky. "I've tried my best, but—but you and me both know how I married you, fearing you'd kill my Pa if I didn't. I've tried to love you. Sometimes, Rube, you've let me come purty close, and—and then, Rube, you've scared me away."

His question came as a hissing whisper, his breath hot behind the words: "You do love Enoch?"

"Yes! Since, I guess,"—she stiffened, seemed to grow much taller, her head lifting—"we were babies together. That, too, is known to God!"

Speechless now, he stood and stared. He saw her head slowly lowering: inch by inch she was getting shorter and shorter. Suddenly she slumped into a huddle beside the table, only great sobs of agony coming up at the place where she had stood, her head down, and her face cupped in her palms.

Dumbly he backed away from the table. Turning like an automaton, he walked around the end of it. He stopped, looking down at her, his hand a gripping ball on the rifle, the thin line of his lips two bloodless bands below a cruel and curving nose.

Seconds passed. Life and death were fighting, going around and around in his brain. Death must have staggered, stumbled. Then, snorting a long-held breath out of him, he was suddenly moving on feet like clubs. He crossed the porch. At the top of the steps he stopped, his chest rising, falling. Without knowing just how he had left the porch, he was walking down the slope, when her frantic voice came crying through the darkness behind him:

"Rube! Rube! Rube!"

BUT, his thoughts choking him, he was like death, walking on, his face grim and gaunt, the jaw jutting like a fist of rock, and the eyes two bullets. His neck was long, and now, as if he had grown old and shrunken within an hour, it looked longer and leaner than ever. In the shadows, even his head seemed to have grown smaller, a turning gourd, only the habit of the years keeping him watchful, marking every streak and blob of shadow, knowing it for what it was before he was too close to duck aside.

Up there behind him, she had called three times. She wouldn't call any more. Little good it would do her, and she knew it. A man had his rights, and took them. The weakling cowered, whimpered, pleading instead of fighting, instead of getting right up and letting fly with fist or gun or knife, knocking them sprawling and dragging them out, bursting down the doors and throwing the chairs through the windows, cursing all the women in the world for God-damned strumpets, raising general hell, then settling it and never having it brought up in his face again!

An eye for an eye, by God, and a tooth for a tooth! That was the mountain code, the one religion of the Pardons before him, the bones of all except this one moldering in their graves. Few of the Pardon menfolk whom Rube could remember had died in bed.

A man who killed could often be forgiven. One who came fiddling around another man's wife was something else. A real man's wife belonged to him from the end of her

longest toenail to the tip of her longest hair. A Pardon, now, killed for her or died for her, and took no back-talk. A good man whipped them when they got out of line; Pa had once slapped Ma down so hard the wax flew out of her ears before she could hit the floor.

ON a little rise he stopped, down around a bend in a big trail where a creek came splurging out of a dark hollow off to his right. An uncomfortable thought made him stop and ponder, a big bright moon tipping the sky behind him, a golden ball up there against the cold white stars.

After all, Lonely had told him little more than the things he already knew. She was afraid of him, never failing to sort of quiver and make him think she was grabbing a quick breath when he put a hand to her. Sometimes she had made him think of a baby catamount he had caught as a boy and tried to tame—always set, bristled and ready to jump, trembling whenever he took her in his arms as a man should.



"Swear in me"—he stepped back, the muzzle unwavering—"swear an swin has sww touched you and you love only me and no other, before God and man here tonight." Lonely covered her face with her hands and sobbed quietly. "That I—I can't do, Rube," she said.

Maybe it had been all written in her face that late Sunday afternoon when the preacher married them. She was so pale and trembly he thought she was going to drop.

And after it was over with, everybody shaking hands and talking and having a big laugh, she had acted like he was about to march her off to death when it was time for them to go. On her pretty head was a little straw hat with ripe cherries nodding on their long stems. He carried the flour-sack that held all her worldly possessions. Rifle on his arm and his head up, she had come tagging along at his heels as they headed toward the old Pardon house high on up the ridge and a mile beyond Devil's Altar.

Sometimes he guessed maybe he shouldn't have stopped up on the smooth flat rocks of Devil's Altar—but he had to come sooner or later. He had bided his time, watching her grow, seeing every line develop and measuring with his eyes, testing its firm smoothness in his mind, waiting, waiting, waiting. Maybe it was what she said when they stopped to catch their breath after the last steep climb. Maybe she had been praying all the way up the ridgeback. The words had come bursting right out of her, her face straining upward, her cry startling him because it was so much like a wail of pain:

"When I come up here so high and high ag'in' the sky I feel so a'mighty close to my God!"

And they were close. A great yellow moon hung on a silvery river of clouds in the east. Only a blue velvet dome of sky and the big stars were looking down.

SOMEHOW tonight brought that all back to him—the big moon up there behind him, the same big moon, the same bright stars blinking down above him. Up there on Devil's Altar there had been only the still and deepening night to listen.

Here the creek tumbling over rough stones in its bed made too much noise for him to be certain, but he moved as if flinching from something, stepping back quickly in the deeper shadows. Cocked to alertness now by what he thought was a faint sound like a twig crackling, he stood tense and still, holding his breath.

Surely now, as surely as he believed in all her God-business, if Lonely was slipping down that trail behind him, trying to follow him, then he would drop a rifle-ball squarely between her pretty blue eyes.

He waited, minutes passing, the hard pine-knot face unchanging. A mountain man was not in the habit of hurrying or trying to push a thing. When out hunting deer, bear or smaller game, he never walked and

climbed or slid like a fool down the slopes. He took his stand, and waited, the same as cutting path on a man to settle a grudge.

But she wasn't coming, she wasn't daring to. Lonely had better sense. Only a long-eared hound could track Rube Pardon's footsteps, by night or by day when he was on the walk for the kill.

Turning, Rube moved off, leaving the trail here and there, too old to games of blood and sudden death in these tall hills to set himself any definite course.

It was four good miles at the least to the old millhouse down in the pan of the hollow. By keeping on this side of the creek it would be the longer way; by crossing the creek on a half-rotted footlog and taking an old trail he would cut more than a mile from the distance, but that would be steep and rough, in places only narrow shelves of rock overhanging the noisy water, and dangerously unprotected.

HE would not take long to deal with Enoch Lee.

For more than a hundred years now the Lees had made their home in the old millhouse or on down in the head of Honey Hollow below it. Enoch's great-grandfather had cut and shaped the huge millstones that had ground the good cornmeal for the people for miles around, with all the Lees after him taking their toll from each sack of grain.

Enoch Lee, some said, would one day rise up as a hardshell Baptist preacher like the gran'pa before him. As yet he had shown no turn for it other than his quiet and sober streak. From fourteen or fifteen, until the war had taken him away, he had worked at the mill, learning from his father the knack of grinding good meal.

During the slack spells at the mill Enoch had fiddled with clay dug from the banks of the creek, wasting his time kneading and squeezing it, shaping it to the likes of men and animals. Some said he was just a little touched in the head. Little girls and boys made mud pies, but Rube Pardon had never heard of anybody making money by shaping fool things from clay. Now there was talk—probably the most of it big lies—of Enoch Lee's winning a first prize and a lot of money somewhere with a group of charging soldiers cast in bronze.

Rube Pardon knew exactly what he was going to do. Since he was twenty-odd he had been a good hand at imitating the voices of other people. Tonight he would just walk down to a long strip of high ground and trees below the mill. There on the rise he would use the cracked voice of old preaching Joe White to call Enoch to

the door—and drop him where he stood.

It was early yet, and there might be no need to call at all. Enoch could be in the big old stone storeroom behind the mill where talk had it that he had set himself up a playhouse for his mud business, with bright gasoline lanterns hanging from the musty beams overhead. His lights often were burning until long after midnight. If he was fiddling with his clay tonight a bullet through the window would suddenly drop him out of business.

There would be excitement, some talk and speculation. People would whisper, but up here men did not go to law. Those who might want to go would not dare. They burned lights at night in their houses. They went up and down lonely roads and trails. Bullets could whistle from the forest shadows, from off the high crags, out of dark hollows. A living man with his mouth closed was better than a dead one with it bagged open.

After the shooting tonight Rube would fade away in the darkness. He would go back to the old Brasher house and have the rest of it done with Lonely, waiting up there on the ridge and crying-her eyes out. Maybe he would have to take a good hickory switch and whip her. Take her by the hair of the head, maybe, flap her belly to the floor. He could kick off his shoe before putting his foot to the back of her neck to hold her, and then just flip up her coat and ward the seat right out of her little backside.

TWO miles above the old millhouse he came back to the creek. As still as a ghost, he stood on the high and rock-walled bank, the water below only a seething whisper over the hard sand and clay flooring. A glimpse of something moving caught his eye: it was a shadow in the rocks and trees across the deep chasm of the stream, gone as quickly as it had come. A ray of moonlight cutting like an arrow through the timber brought it back a couple of rods from where it had first appeared. A glint, and it was gone again.

An oath whispered through Rube Pardon's teeth.

Lonely had cut back-trail on him and was trying to get through to Enoch! She had taken to the footlog, balancing herself high above the dangerous rocks and roaring water to cross the creek. Eyes set, Rube waited for her to break cover again, knowing that the moonlight had merely tipped the crown of her head for the second time.

The rifle came around with a forward thrust of his arm. The hammer was back, cocked without a sound as he held a tight finger on the trigger.



America's First Aviator

WHO WAS THE TRUE FATHER of American aviation? Ask almost anyone, and the answer is, "The Wright brothers, who else?" But ask the people who fly lighter-than-air craft—blimp pilots and free ballooners—and you get a different answer.

They will maintain, and there is evidence to back them up, that it wasn't the Wright brothers at all, but an obscure French daredevil whose name is almost unknown—Jean Pierre Blanchard.

Fifty years before the Wright brothers were born, Blanchard went aloft over Philadelphia. He conducted the first aerial scientific experiments, started aviation medicine, and carried the first airmail letter.

It happened more than one hundred fifty years ago, on January 9, 1793, and there were reputable people there to attest to his feat. George Washington was there; so were Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, and James Monroe, not to mention a host of lesser lights who had assembled in the yard of the Walnut Street Prison to witness the much-publicized event.

Blanchard was not just a publicity-seeker. An inventor-scientist, he had the determined notion that man could use the air for transportation and he had made forty-four ascensions in Europe.

That January morning, according to Blanchard's log, there was "a light breeze from the West-Northwest—Fahrenheit's 47 degrees—corrected altitude of the barometer 29 inches, seven lines."

Blanchard attached the car which was "laden with ballast, meteorological instruments, and some refreshments," waved good-bye to the crowd, accepted the President's good wishes and a letter requesting that no harm be done Blanchard (the first airmail), and jumped into the car.

The ground ropes were released, cannons boomed, and Blanchard's balloon lifted. The hydrogen-filled silk bag went up almost to 6,000 feet, caught a gentle breeze, and floated to a wooded spot in New Jersey about fifteen miles from the starting point.

On the way, Blanchard made his experiments. At the request of a Doctor Rush he kept track of his pulse. He recorded it in his log at 92 beats per minute and thus gave the first aviation-medicine records.

Then, because he "had been requested by Doctor Glinworth to make experiments in the ethereal regions with a load-stone," (sic) Blanchard carried out the first experiment in aerial science. He weighed the lodestone, and found it one and one-half ounces lighter than it was on the ground.

Blanchard brought the balloon down by opening the gas valve, and landed in a treetop. That ended America's first attempt at aviation, a flight that has gone all but unnoticed in the pages of history. His only monument is a plaque put up by an insurance company in the corridor of a Philadelphia building, a building occupying the site of the old Walnut Street Prison. It is believed that he died in The Hague, but his burying-place is unmarked.

—Theodore Taylor

A quick drop-shot would stop her in her tracks, with no aim to be seen behind it—the rifle held waist-high, the hammer smoothed and polished to slip from under his thumb.

He was going to miss her when she was gone, maybe. That thought jarred through his brain. It was only a jar, and he might have blinked his eyes just once. That was all; a Pardon could stand his hurt. Not for any price on earth would he forgive her now.

But she gave him no chance for his shot. She appeared just once more, and not at the place he expected her. She had swung closer into the darker timber. A leap, a dash, and she was across a couple of yards of opening, a tricky fox giving the dodge to the hounds. She was a real mountain-woman, and for that he had to admire her. Now she would not appear again, and would go right on short-cutting through the timber, with the darkness hiding her, and the chasm of the creek making him remain on his side.

He started running, realizing he had the long distance to go. Dropping down one of the final slopes to the pan of the valley itself, he stopped on the rim of another. Now the millhouse was below him, the moonlight bathing it. Just above it the creek bent sharply to the right to pass on the upper side. The grass-rimmed mill-race ran straight on.

But its gates were closed now, just a dribble spilling over the moss-green old waterwheel locked to a standstill for the night.

And then, having delayed at the millhouse or at least not so far ahead of him as he had feared, he saw them come out of a dark doorway to go hurrying away in the shadows of a line of alders along the lower side of the creek. With Enoch carrying a long old rifle, and limping, they were like a frightened buck and a doe breaking cover.

It would be nearly two miles to Uncle Tim Lee's house and blacksmith shop. Before they had covered half the distance he could cut their trail. The gun Enoch was carrying would be his grandfather's old hog rifle, a muzzle-loader. The Lees had never been people to cater to guns.

Always like a cat when it came to touching foot to water, he jumped the millrace in a long leap when he came to it.

Going up a slope, he slid into the bushes—like a dark panther moving so silently one could not have heard him from fifty paces away.

Now he had them where he wanted them, the creek between them, the bushes hiding him while he could watch their every move. But before

long they gave him a little jolt of surprise by making an abrupt turn and coming across the creek on a pole-railed footlog.

They were not heading for Tim Lee's, after all. They were turning north to mount the big rise at the head of Honey Hollow. Over that rise they would face the dark mouth of the Big Whiskey country.

"Jackson country!" He spat the whisper. "Breed of the damned!"

Yes, the Jacksons were up there in their deep dark hollows and high on the wild reaches of the mountains. Not one had set foot near the Sam Brasher house since the tale had leaked out that Lonely was going to marry a Pardon, and now she was going to do her best to get through to them.

Of course they would snort and cuss if she managed it, but she was blood of their blood, and God nor man would make them deny it or turn it aside when it came to their door in trouble.

Hating the hide-out distilling of old corn moonshine, as she hated all its blood-letting, Lonely knew the devil was knocking at her door, or she never would have headed for Big Whiskey. Up there it was always blood. They made their moon by the barrel. The law was always coming and going, and for the past few years the moonshiners kept sticks of dynamite hung in trees. At the first sign of the law's approach an explosion shook the hills, a warning to be heard for miles. After that one explosion followed another, every hollow and crag alert to the danger, the law turning back before it could really get started, knowing there was no use to go on.

And there was no use for Lonely and Enoch to try, either. He had the jump and go on them, and they might have known he would outsmart them. Even now he could open up and drop them, but it was not his habit to kill like that. When his mind was made up to kill he liked to see them jump, a wild stare fill their eyes, their inwards turning to jelly, the blood going out of their faces. What a drained and awful look to come in their faces when he suddenly stepped in front of them, a soft fool like young Enoch Lee trying to run away with Rube Pardon's wife!

He stopped a few times, looking at them in the moonlight, animal jealousy burning in his eyes, thoughts whirling with the memory of her warmth, the softness of her arms, the tremble of her body. If Enoch Lee only put his arm around her, he would shoot them down from here.

But he hurried on, breaking into a run, buck-jumping this way, that way, his long legs making him like some

strange flying bird. He knew exactly where he was going. It would be something like Devil's Altar up there on the big ridge, only not nearly so high, and certainly not with a certain memory attached to it. The place ahead would only be a mound of rocks and earth twenty feet high and forty across, the opening to Big Whiskey just beyond them.

Lonely and Enoch couldn't possibly have seen him when he came to the place. He got around behind it and slipped back over the top. A couple of shaggy little pines on the south side were enough to hide him. Now he would run no more, waste no more breath. The race was over, and by all the ingrained code of the mountains he would never be blamed for killing a man caught face-to-face, running off with his wife.

Suddenly those thoughts were at an end, a start stiffening him. Out of the corners of his eyes he had caught a flicker of reflected light in the bushes off to his right. His lower jaw jerked, dropped. For a second he stood with his mouth open, the iron man on the rocks.

Hold, now, hold! Only moonlight on a gun-barrel could make a flicker like the one that had come to him. Then he saw, and understood. Another law raid was ready for a sneak into Big Whiskey. Men were there in the head of the beginning hollow, maybe a dozen, maybe twenty this time. Guns and more guns were coming up. The law, by God, and every fee-grabbing bastard in the lot a would-be man to hate the sight of Rube Pardon!

A little ledge could make a man a bellowing bully, but it would never put real guts in him! Some yellow-belly had spotted him, tall, still and straight on the rocks. A nervous hand jerked, wiggled. The ray of a powerful flashlight cut the moonlight from eighty yards away, the jerking coward behind it whipping it this way and that. It swept up, only half-steadying, wiggling as if gripped in two shaking hands. All at once it covered him, its glare gleaming silver on his rifle-barrel. In a gasp that came all the way from the bottom of a quivering belly, a man spoke, his voice the grunt of a startled fat hog.

"God damn! That—that's Rube Pardon!"

"Kill the son-of-a-bitch!"

But Rube was first. His rifle swung, crashed. The light went out as if a bullet had smashed through it from end to end. He stepped back, his loading lever pumping, another shot crashing. Suddenly the bushes were like hellfire jumping in his face, the night roaring as they fought back at him.

He went down, pumping, shooting. Pain screamed in his right hip, and the rifle hammer clacked on an empty firing-chamber. He threw the weapon aside, heard it clatter away on the rocks, and up came the two old five-shooters, their smoke bursting rings of grayness, their gashes of fire stabbing lightning in the moonlight.

Another sound came to him through all the noise. It was a great thunder in the north, the shake and far blast of dynamite. Big Whiskey was booming its signals to douse the fires and duck to the bushes with the precious worms of the stills.

He was up, then down again, a cursing, snarling and spitting mad dog, the last of the Pardons in one last hell-roaring fight. He should have stayed down; common sense should have held him there. But he came up, backing against a waist-high rock, snorting blood as he killed a man to the right, another to the left. As he killed, a long-barreled shotgun roared. Buckshot hailed around him, whistled, beating itself to death and splatters on the rocks. He stiffened. That was all, just stiffened, reeled back against the rock, his hands tighter than banjo-heads on the black butts of the old five-shooters—the last of the Pardons still on his feet, immovable, leering at them through the blood.

"No, Enoch, no! Don't leave me!" Lonely pleaded frantically.

But he had to go. They had dropped face-forward on the ground, his right arm curving around her, holding her all through the noise. Now it was at an end, only the far booming in the hills trembling down, the Jacksons and their kind still letting off their blasts.

"The law has never wanted me," he said quietly and took her into his arms.

"I'm so scared, Enoch!"
"I won't be long!"

He pulled away, got up, and moved on, the old rifle left beside her. She saw him lift his hands, his body and arms making him a limping Y in the moonlight. She heard him calling to the excited swarm of men ahead. It seemed that he was gone forever before she saw him coming back to her. With a leap she was on her feet to meet him.

"Tell me, Enoch!"

"Yes, Lonely!" He put out his arms for her. "It was Rube."

"Is he—is he—"

"Yes, Lonely!" He nodded. "Nothing on all this earth stands in our way now! He's all right now!"

"All right!"

"He's all right, yes,"—he nodded—"for the first time since he's been big enough to shoot a gun. Rube Pardon's dead."

At least 150 million Americans have never heard of Bob Hoffman, but as the mahatma of weight-lifting, he almost started World War III.



THE BIG MOGUL OF MUSCLE

■ **By PAT RYAN** LAST AUGUST, the photos of four Americans and the mention of a fifth, under a Helsinki dateline, caused near-riots in Cairo, Egypt, and almost triggered World War III.

In Moscow, they provoked *Pravda* to curse the Americans in hate-laden editorials as the imperialistic thieves who had robbed Russia's heroes of their deserved glory.

In Paris, the photo story threw a monkey wrench into the State Department's *Voice of America*, which seeks to win friends and influence peoples to the ultimate gain of the United States.

The four Americans were John Davis, Norbert Schemansky, Pete George and Tommy Kono. They were not important as international politicians or high-level military brass. They were athletes who had just become the "Olympic Weight Lifting Team Champions" at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, Finland.

The national sport of Egypt is weight-lifting, and a State Department spokesman reported: "The almost hysterical reaction in Egypt to the announcement of the Americans' victory knocked the props right out from under us. You know, our job here is to sell democracy and American friendship to the world

—and, since the Americans were both white and colored, we thought it a great story for our cause. But when the news flashed in that the Egyptians were practically up in arms, we were caught on the fence—midway between justifiable pride in our American athletes, both white and colored, and an attitude of defensive apology. The situation was actually so serious in Cairo that from minute to minute we feared an international incident."

To the Soviet the four American musclemen were *saboteurs* guilty of exploding the carefully propagated Communist myth that the Russians were the new physical supermen of the 20th Century. According to the *New York Times*' Moscow correspondent, the Russian news services were labeling the victors as "really decadent weaklings of the capitalistic society."

The late Dietrich Wortmann, U.S. Olympic official, summed up the Russian attitude when he announced to the American press, "I think we broke the Russians' hearts when we beat their weight-lifting idol, Gregori Novak. He's a legend in the Soviet Union. As a former world champion, he's such a big shot that he dines with Stalin."

The unphotographed fellow, who actually was the man chiefly responsible for giving so many people a king-sized headache, was Bob Hoffman,

coach of the U.S. Olympic weight-lifters, and the mainspring of a snow-balling movement to make Americans conscious of strength and health. Bob Hoffman's enthusiasm parlayed a dilapidated Model-T Ford and a single old-fashioned barbell into a multi-million-dollar business. He has manufactured more than 1,000,000 barbells; sells more than 100,000 copies per month of his magazine *Strength and Health*—the weight-lifters' bible; consults with doctors about the therapeutic values of weight-lifting, and has spent a quarter of a million dollars in spreading the gospel of muscle building into every corner of the United States. Thousands of his followers write him so regularly at his home in York, Pa., that the postoffice now also automatically delivers to him all mail addressed to the "York Strongman, Muscletown, U.S.A."

Hoffman took barbells and weight-lifting away from circus sideshows and professional strongmen, and he transplanted them into the everyday lives of more than 3,000,000 Americans. This was accomplished during a period when our athletic coaches and trainers were loudly wailing over the diminishing supply of material for the diamond, the gridiron and the basketball courts of America.

To do it, he had to overcome the prejudices of millions who regarded

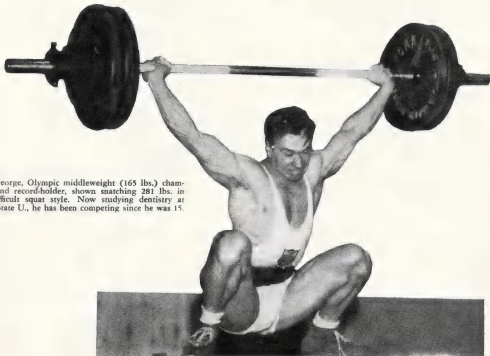
barbells solely as the playthings of faddists and muscle-bound jerks.

In 1930 it was an entirely different story. His neighbors in York then regarded Bob Hoffman as a crackpot. It was the first dreary year of the depression and he had sold out his successful manufacturing business to go into a new venture. "Something crazy, like physical culture," they'd tell you.

Bob first came across barbells and weight-training in the early 1920's, when he and his brother Charles were the traveling-salesmen proprietors of a one-lung enterprise called the York Oil Burner Company. A physical culturist who struck up a roadside friendship with the two young businessmen presented Bob with a 150-pound barbell and a verbal briefing on the exercises to perform. He had sold Bob such a powerful bill of goods that despite Charles' objections the barbell traveled right along with their two battered suitcases in the back of the old Model T.

It became routine for the Hoffmans to halt en route while Bob picked out a near-by meadow where he could go through his workout. Charles, resigned to the situation, would wait patiently until his brother's fit of madness passed.

"I went out on the road weighing 175," Hoffman has declared. "And I



Pete George, Olympic middleweight (165 lbs.) champion and record-holder, shown snatching 281 lbs. in the difficult squat style. Now studying dentistry at Ohio State U., he has been competing since he was 15.

wasn't too strong. But 12 months later I weighed in at 191 and I could put 140 pounds over my head with one hand." (Today, Hoffman lifts better than 280 pounds with one hand. He scales in at 250 and sports a 52-inch chest and a 35-inch waist.)

At this time Bob took the second step in the direction of his ultimate career. He began to make barbell sets and press them upon his friends.

For the next eight years Bob Hoffman pursued a sort of ambidextrous career, studiously mixing business with pleasure. But his pursuit of pleasure was viewed with horror by his fellow traveling-salesmen friends. Instead of wining the lady buyers and dancing the feet off them till dawn broke through, this guy was busy running in track meets, swimming rivers, wrestling with strong men and taking on amateur boxers.

The brothers employed a fixed routine when they hit town. Charles would diligently get down to work on a list of prospects for the sales canvass. Meanwhile, Bob would check the gyms and athletic fields to discover what meets or athletic tournaments he could enter. Then he'd rejoin Charles to work over the customers. Later they'd declare time out so they could attend the event together. Bob would do the job in the field while Charles kept watch on clothes, money and the judges.

"It was an average week when I'd enter three athletic contests in as many different towns," Hoffman remembered. "Today the most cherished possession in my home is my board of medals." It's a giant section of wood on which hang more than 500 medals representing victories in aquatic sports, track meets, handball, boxing and wrestling. Hoffman often wonders how he did it. "Those were rugged days for Charles and me," he says. "Lots of times we had to keep two big appetites satisfied on a ham sandwich split between us. Most of our dough used to go for gas."

Barnstorming quickly demonstrated the need for publicity and self-promotion, so the boys decided to cash in on Bob's athletic prowess. Thereafter their sales pitch called for Charles to slide a foot in the customer's door to hold the prospect's attention while brother Bob went into a spiel on sports, with only occasional references to oil burners. This sales technique paid off for quite a spell in enough currency to refuel the Ford and to keep their appetites in check.

For the exceptionally tough customers they presented a slightly varied dramatization. Charles, as MC and interlocutor, would introduce Bob as the hammer-fisted young heavyweight sensation of World War I's AEF.

The pitch worked like a charm. Nine out of ten men would invite the hero into the parlor for a bull session.

Then Bob, crouched in fighting pose in the center of the parlor floor, would toss jabs and hooks, punctuating his efforts with a running commentary of his fights with the great British fighters Bombardier Wells and Bandsman Rice. As an encores, he would give the fascinated prospect the blow-by-blow highlights of his match with the lithe French dancing-master Georges Carpentier—who was later to meet Jack Dempsey in the first of boxing's million-dollar gates. Occasionally he'd mention one of his toughest slugfests—the match with a slick hard-to-hit guy out of the Marines, named Gene Tunney.

With that oblique entree, sales became easy.

By the late 20's the York oil burners were moving into customers' homes at a terrific clip. Charles now stayed at home to boss production while Bob traveled the territory in a shiny new Buick. But in the back seat he still carried the battered old barbell.

Finally, 1930 rolled around. It was the year of decision for Bob, and he took time out for a personal inventory which sounded something like this: "I like the oil-burner business, but I like weight-lifting and physical culture better. As it is, I'm spending more time telling people about weights and making sets for them than selling burners. I think I'll have a talk with Charles." So Bob had a talk with his brother and wound up by selling his interest in the business.

Hoffman now became a man with a full-time mission, a crusader determined to make America muscle-conscious. York, Pa., he decided, would become the muscle capital of the world. Located in the heart of the Pennsylvania Dutch country, it's a slow, sleepy little community whose sole claim to international distinction is the presence today of Hoffman and his troupe of world-famous athletes.

His first step was to found the York Barbell Company and to establish its official mouthpiece, the *Strength and Health* magazine, which he set up downtown in a deserted two-story factory building. He painted the front of the structure, dressed the display windows with suitable paraphernalia, set up business and editorial offices on the second-floor front, and built a gymnasium in the second-floor rear. To this day these latter quarters are the headquarters of Hoffman's third brain child, the world-renowned York Barbell Club.

Its initial assets were the best-equipped weight gymnasium in the United States, with access to plenty of the newest equipment in the downstairs factory; a full-time director and

coach—Bob Hoffman—and a goodly stack of folding money. But no members.

Weight-lifting was practically unheard of except in German and Slovak communities. The immigrants, who had learned the lifts in the old country, would teach them to their sons, and they competed among themselves. "In Europe it was a major sport, but here in the U.S. weight-lifting was strictly for the birds," Bob says.

His constant complaint was and still is, that "Weight-lifting is the most misunderstood sport in America." It seems that before World War I most lifters were big beefy men of the Continental type. They were strong, but not fast or athletic. This gave newspapermen the idea that weight-lifting was responsible.

When Bob found that the lifters weren't coming to him, he decided he would have to drag them out of hiding and shanghai them under the York colors. He gassed up the Buick and took to the road on a scouting tour. Burning a hole in his pocket were names and addresses of lifters who had enjoyed even the slightest of fame as strong men. Chasing them down took him through Pennsylvania, New York and up into the New England States, and as usual, he carried the old barbell in the back seat. It was a sort of visible lodge card in the fellowship of lifters.

After Bob had delivered a powerful sales-talk on the York Barbell Club and the bright future that awaited the lucky candidate he was tapping for membership, he would invite the young man out to the car. There he would swing the weight out of the back seat and run through a few lifts to prove that he was one of the boys. This was usually the clincher which convinced the prospect he "really should go down to York for at least a visit."

THERE were some highlights to these demonstrations, but "the topper happened in Boston." Hoffman says that he was busy giving a free-wheeling weight demonstration to a prospect when a police prowler, sirens screaming, screeched to a halt beside them on the street.

"It seems a neighbor called the cops and told them 'Two crazy men are jumping up and down in the street with a wild contraption on their back. Get them out of there or anything might happen.' And, before the cops left, it almost did. Our exercises didn't make sense to the police sergeant and he wanted to run us in for disturbing the peace. But finally he scratched his head, looked at both of us as if we were fools, and walked back to the squad car. We could hear him saying to the patrolman driver, 'Look

at them two, jumping up and down like monkeys in the zoo! And they do be full-grown men, too. I'd run them in if they was drunk, but they're cold sober. Cold sober, mind you!"

"One thing is for sure," Hoffman laughed, "I haven't done as much lifting in any single week ever since that trip! Every day was a heavy workout with a local strong boy. And I had to come through, just to prove that I was the real McCoy."

Hoffman's recruiting campaign slowly began to pay off. One by one the Pennsylvania Railroad began delivering weight-lifters to York. The first was Tony Terlazzo, then came Dick Bachtell, Art Levan and Dick Good. By midsummer Hoffman had himself a small herd of musclemen cavorting around the premises. They were of all ages, sizes and degrees of experience.

Hoffman wasn't interested in just

the meets around New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. For his big scheme, the plan to sell American weight-lifting, he needed a much larger arena. He found it at the 1932 Olympic Games which were staged in Los Angeles.

Johnny Terpak, Bob's chief aide and twice world's middleweight champion, summed up the Hoffman attitude. "The boys had to get their feet wet somewhere," said Johnny. "So Bob modestly figured that the Olympics were as good a place as any."

When Hoffman's nervy little band of adventurers put in their appearance, they were the talk of the Olympics. The Germans, Poles, Hungarians and the rest laughed at the sight of their puny opponents. As one expert put it, "These York fellas belong in here like Rudy Vallee does in Madison Square Garden fighting Mickey Walker. It's kinda ridiculous."

And little David did not knock out Goliath. Instead, the European lifters were so superior that they won every championship and runner-up position in each of the six divisions. However, the underdogs didn't have to run away with their tails between their legs. Tony Terlazzo and Dick Good had won third in their respective classes—the lightweight and light-heavyweight divisions.

Hoffman shipped the boys back to York, sent them directly to the gym, and then trained his sights on the 1936 Olympics. Meanwhile, such recruits as John Grimek, a light-heavyweight sensation, were working out with early Hoffman pioneers Terlazzo, Bachtell, Levan and Good. This quintet hit their stride between Olympics and put York on the map by winning national and international titles every year from 1932 through 1936. Now the experts began rating Tony Terlazzo as the greatest lifter, pound for pound, in the world.

When the curtain was rung up in 1936 for the Olympics in Berlin, Germany, Hoffman sent in a pat handful of national stars and he was leading with his ace Terlazzo, who had trained down from 148 pounds to enter the 132-pound featherweight division.

"We gave them the fight of their lives," says Terpak. "When the scores were tabulated, we had scored the biggest upset of the games. We finished up there in the Big Three. Only Germany and Egypt had outscored us. Our boys scored in nearly every class, and Tony won the Olympic featherweight championship." It was just six years and two Olympics since the York Barbell Club had opened its doors.

That same year Hoffman decided to put the show on the road. He was ready for the second step of his campaign to win over the public. He



John Grimek, associate editor of *Strength and Health*, is considered the best-developed man of all time. He won the "Mr. America" title so often that he has been barred from competition.

booked the York men anywhere in the United States where he could create the demand. So they hit the cities and small towns, appearing in YMCA's, church basements, high-school auditoriums and health clubs, where they would stage lifting- and body-building exhibitions. And Hoffman was always looking for an opportunity to go on tour. "Whenever Bob saw the boys getting lazy around the gym, he'd line up exhibitions," Terpak recalls.

On tour, Hoffman was the master of ceremonies. At the start of the program he'd step down to the footlights and let the audience in on what was about to happen. Then, after describing the purpose of the various stunts and exercises, he would slip in the propaganda:

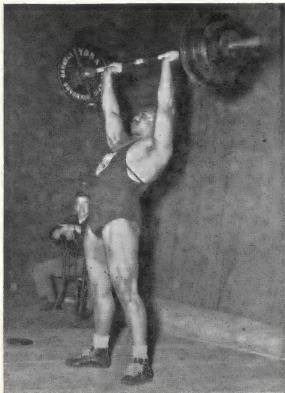
"Progressive exercise and right living provide the best form of life insurance," he would say. "Most men say they get plenty of exercise doing their daily work—that they're too tired to exercise when they're through. Well, work is not exercise. Work is exhausting, while exercise, good food and sound sleep are revitalizing."

The unexpected crowds that turned out for these tours were the delight of Hoffman's life. There was always a group at the "stage" door to ask him questions and to catch his stars for their autographs. "We were definitely making an impression," he says.

York's trip to Berlin in '36 had given Bob the international virus. So he dug down in his sock and came up with enough cash to send the boys to Paris in 1937 and Vienna the following year. At Paris, York won two new titles. Johnny Terpak became the world middleweight champ and the invincible Terlazzo stepped up a notch to cop the lightweight honors.

Hoffman brought off his greatest personal triumph at Vienna in 1938. He set the weight-lifting world back on its heels when he introduced the Joe Louis of the weight-lifters—a 17-year-old Negro schoolboy from Brooklyn, named John Davis. Although Davis had never appeared in major competition, Hoffman sent him in to do a man's work. Matched against young Davis were the most powerful light-heavyweight lifters in the game, including the veteran Fritz Haller of Austria and France's Louis Hostin, two-time Olympic champion. It was a tough spot for even a seasoned campaigner.

Without batting an eye at the fast company, Davis cleaned and jerked a staggering 352 pounds, then shattered the world record for the press by a tremendous 221½ pounds. (A world record is usually broken by as little as 16 ounces.) When the York men said good-bye to Vienna, John Davis was the new Light-Heavyweight Lifting



John Davis, Olympic heavyweight champion, is the world's strongest man. His three-Olympic-lift combination of 1062½ lbs. is tops by far.



Here's the U. S. Olympic weight-lifting team, photographed at Helsinki last year. Left to right, kneeling: Richard Tom, bantam, and Clyde Emrich, light-heavy. First row, standing: Stan Stanczyk, light-heavy; Richard Tomita, feather; Pete George, middle; Jim Bradford, heavy; John Davis, heavy; Norbert Schemansky, middle-heavy; and Tommy Kono, light. Back row: Johnny Terpak, ass't coach; John T. Garland, official; Alvin Roy, trainer; Dietrich Wortmann, manager; Dave Matlin, ass't manager; Bob Hoffman, coach; Clarence Johnson, ass't manager.

WORDLY WISE



BALLYHOO

ONE of the most noted social clubs of the last century was Long Island's exclusive South Side Club. In keeping with the spirit of the times, new members were subjected to elaborate initiations.

A favorite rural joke of the period was sending youngsters snipe-hunting. Many a gullible boy stood for hours, holding a bag and waiting for the nonexistent bird to fly into it. Members of the South Side Club refined the old prank, and frequently sent initiates to hunt the ballyhoo bird. Legends accumulated about the fowl, and in time it came to be described as having four wings and two heads. Even more remarkable, it could use its two mouths simultaneously—whistling with one and singing with the other.

In July, 1880, *Harper's Magazine* described the wonderful ballyhoo. Readers promptly began comparing the cries of circus spielers with the bizarre performances of the mythical bird. As a result, all sensational publicity came to be called ballyhoo.

—Webb B. Garrison

Champion of the world, and in his future lay the possible distinction of becoming the greatest lifter in the game.

Since his debut in 1938, Davis has grown tremendously. At Vienna he was a rather slim 181-pound heavyweight. Today he tips the scales at more than 230 pounds of gleaming muscle and sinew. Built along the lines of a blockbuster, he sports a 48-inch chest, 17-inch biceps and 28-inch thighs. Although he is the strongest man in the world, Davis, who stands only five feet nine, has to cock his head to look up at some of the giants he meets in weight tournaments.

During the interim before the Helsinki Olympics in 1952, Davis worked hard to better his own marks. For one thing, he concentrated on his three-Olympic-lift combination. Just five men in the annals of the sport had ever scored a combined total of over 1,000 pounds for the press, the snatch, and the clean and jerk.

At Paris in 1946 Davis had rolled up the score of 985½ pounds. More than enough to top any other lifters, but not quite good enough to qualify him for membership in the all-time inner circle of elite strong men. So month by month, he worked at averaging an approximate monthly gain of 20 ounces, until at the Pan-American Games in Buenos Aires in 1951, he racked up the unheard-of score of 1062½ pounds. Before he puts the barbells away for good, Davis hopes to hoist up 1100 pounds. In weight-lifting circles that's the equivalent of the four-minute mile for runners.

Victory at Helsinki capped an impressive 20-year record for Hoffman's boys. Against the combined competition of the 82-nation membership of the International Federation of Weight Lifters, they have won five Olympic division titles and the 1952 team title. At home, the York Barbell Club produced 84 national champions; for 20 years, 1932-1952, they were the national team champs.

Weight-lifting is the subject of endless controversy, particularly among doctors. Some medical men use weights extensively to rehabilitate patients needing physical therapy. Others claim it causes heart trouble, high blood pressure, hardening of the arteries and varicose veins.

Naturally, Hoffman swears by the weights and claims, "I've received more than 10,000 letters of thanks for the advice and help I have offered." Many hundreds of these are printed in his *Strength and Health* magazine, accompanied by "before and after" pictures. In addition his office files bulge with correspondence from general practitioners and orthopedic surgeons.

Television and stage star Paul Winchell is a particularly prominent example of the benefits of Hoffman's weight-lifting courses. Paul was stricken with polio when he was very young and to rehabilitate his body he began a regular routine of weight exercises. Today, Winchell could enter any physique contest and probably wind up in the finals, an amazing contrast to the frail skinny kid he once was.

Hoffman claims that there's nothing surprising about such cases. He says he gets letters telling similar stories almost every day. Would I care to look at some?

I picked letters at random from Hoffman's mail. The first disclosed that young Richard Marcotte of Taunton, Mass., had suffered from bronchial asthma until he was 17. However, when he took to regular weight-training, he was able to boost his weight from 105 to 148 pounds and become an all-around athlete. Another Hoffman fan piece glowed enthusiastically that Robert Blake of Chicago had dropped 100 pounds off his lardy frame within three months. He was very grateful to Hoffman because he had developed a physique impressive enough to win second place in York's annual self-development contest. And all the rest of the letters I scanned for the next twenty minutes were in the same vein.

DURING World War II the Surgeon General of the U. S. Army sent York the biggest order in its history—an urgent request for the rush manufacture of 100,000 barbell sets for shipment to service and veterans' hospitals at home and overseas.

Among the first medics to pioneer in the use of Hoffman's weights was Dr. Thomas Delorme, orthopedic surgeon at the veterans' Gardner General Hospital in Chicago, where he used them extensively in treating limb injuries. Under his direction the soldiers and sailors went through a regular daily schedule of exercises every hour on the hour. As the vets grew stronger, he increased the poundage. This technique was successful enough in many cases to have the patients out of bed in one third of the usual time. For his research in Heavy Resistance Therapy the Army awarded Dr. Delorme the Legion of Merit, and his findings were used in other veterans' hospitals.

Generally speaking, the men who use weights fall into two categories. John Davis and Middle-Heavyweight Champion Norbert Schemansky are typical weight-lifters. They have made a sport of tossing around hundreds of pounds of back-breaking weights in national and international meets. Whereas, John Grimek, Jim Park

("Mr. America—1952") and John Farbotnik are body-builders. They combine weight exercises with gymnastics and acrobatics to develop the body.

Of the two, the body-builder lives more generously. He pleases only himself. There are no records for him to establish, no weight-lifting worlds to conquer. So he is satisfied with two or three workouts a week, averaging about an hour and one half per session. Hoffman says this is enough to build an impressive body and to keep most men in excellent condition.

"The average man on this program comes in weighing 150 and less," says Hoffman. "He may be a lawyer, doctor, advertising man or student. But, regardless of occupation, his primary concern is to regain his health or to build a stronger body. And occasionally we do get the Romeo type who thinks only about the romantic figure he'll cut on the beach next summer. However, he, too, often sees the light and becomes interested in weights solely from a health angle."

Most of these men, however, learned about weight-lifting during the last war. Men in the service took to the weights to relieve the boredom and monotony of isolated Army and Navy bases.

"When they came home, the schools and universities flooded us with requests for training information," said Hoffman. "Now the Massachusetts Institute of Technology gives varsity letters to weight-lifters. And there are active programs at Harvard University, University of Maryland, Penn State, West Point and Annapolis."

Yet Hoffman isn't entirely happy. True, tons of barbells and weights are going out of Muscletown every day in the week. Just last September he sold barbell number 1,000,000. However, despite approximately 3,000,000 American muscle enthusiasts, there is a shortage of topnotch lifters.

"Most of the young fellows today are interested in building better bodies," he says. "Of course, that's my big goal, too—a young America interested in building strong and healthy bodies. But I also want to see some champion lifters. One of these days we're going to need fellows to step into the shoes of John Davis, Joe Pitman and Norbert Schemansky. The United States will need men for the Olympics and the world meets."

To train as a weight-lifter is a career in itself, however, and most men simply don't have the time. For example, John Davis regularly schedules himself four workouts every week. His minimum runs about two hours. By the end of the month he has probably spent approximately 44 hours at the gym. Figured on a yearly basis, this

represents three months of working-days spent on exercise.

In addition, Davis must watch his diet carefully because lifting burns up tremendous amounts of energy. He actually lives a Spartan existence, husbanding his energy and foregoing late hours and gay rounds of social activity. He has to, if he wants to stay up there on top.

On one score Hoffman is happy. And that is the fact that many athletes in other fields use weights in their training. Some of the headliners are Bobby Feller, Ted Williams and Ralph Kiner. Then there's Steve Van Buren of the Philadelphia Eagles, Randy Turpin, British light-heavyweight contender, and Frank Stranahan, the Toledo boy who won the British Open. And recently the Reverend Bob Richards visited York to speak to Hoffman and to pick up a new Olympic weight set. Richards won the 1952 Olympic pole-vaulting title as well as the Sullivan Award as the nation's outstanding amateur athlete.

WEIGHT-LIFTING as a competitive sport in the United States had no status until 1927 when a weight-lifting contest was held in Philadelphia. It was hailed as a national-championship affair, but Hoffman summed up the caliber of the lifters when he said, "I won the national heavyweight title with lifts that featherweights can do today."

In 1929, the Amateur Athletic Union took weight-lifting under its direction and sanction and in that same year staged the first AAU official championships in New York City. (Today the AAU is affiliated with the International Federation of Weight Lifting, comprised of 82 nations.)

For the past 23 years, with time out for World War II, there have been regularly scheduled national, world and Olympic contests. The competitions are divided into seven classes, scaled for men of all weights. They are fixed at 125 pounds, 152, 148, 165, 181, 198 or middle-heavyweight, and heavyweight—for men over 198 pounds.

Lifters from Europe, the United States, South America, Asia, Africa and the Pacific meet annually in the World Championships which are usually rotated between Paris, London, Milan and the United States.

When they appear in national and international meets, the lifters must perform specific lifts, designed to test the strength of a Hercules.

First: The Two Hands Military Press. The bar is laid horizontally in front of the lifter's feet, gripped with both hands and brought with one distinct motion to the shoulders. The bar is rested on the chest for two sec-

onds, then lifted vertically until the arms are completely extended without any jerking or sudden starting. It must remain there for another two seconds before being brought down.

Second: The Two Hands Snatch. The bar from its horizontal position is pulled with one continuous motion from the ground to arms' length and raised vertically above the head. It must pass along the body in a non-stop motion and then be held motionless for two seconds, with the arms and legs stiff and the feet not more than 16 inches apart.

Third: The Two Hands Clean and Jerk. The bar is brought with a single distinct motion from the ground to the shoulders while either lunging or springing on bent legs. (It must not touch the chest before reaching its final position at the shoulders.) The feet are first brought back to the original position on the same line, then the legs are bent and both arms and legs stiffened suddenly with a jerk, to lift the bar far above the head. It is then held there for a full two seconds.

It's amazing to watch little men perform these lifts. They can toss around poundages which would put the average steelworker or lumberjack in the hospital. The best example around today of a good little man is Namdjou of Iran. He is the World Champ in the Bantamweight (123) class. When he gets warmed up in a meet, this mite can press 198 pounds, snatch 215 and breeze through the clean and jerk, handling 286 pounds.

To illustrate the difference between a good heavyweight lifter and Olympic Champ John Davis just look at these figures: The good heavyweight can probably press 200 pounds, snatch 220 and do the clean with about 306. However, "Hercules" Davis presses 342, snatches 335 and cleans 405 pounds. Incidentally, his marks are world records.

Despite Bob Hoffman's loud wails of anguish at the prospect of America's losing prestige in future international meets because the young men of today are strictly physique-conscious, the Olympic coach manages quietly to fill out the berths on his teams. And tucked away in his stable is a great array of potential talent.

It's true that just as in boxing or wrestling, the heavyweight champ gets the lion's share of publicity. But in the meets the performances of lifters in every class help bring home those team championships. So it's just as important that the lightweight, middleweights and middle-heavyweights shall win, as it is for John Davis to romp through to another sensational victory.

Hoffman has two possible successors to Davis, both of whom are still in

their twenties, and he has excellent prospects in the other weight divisions.

First is Norbert Schemansky, the current World's 198-pound Middle-Heavyweight Champion. Although he is not a full-fledged heavyweight, the experts predict that the quiet, bespectacled young Detroitier is the man to watch. To date, Schemansky has established four world records in the middle-heavyweight division. His official marks for the three Olympic lifts are impressive: 295 for the press; 310 for the two-hand snatch, and 380 in the clean and jerk. Schemansky's official total for the three is officially set at 980, but in recent workouts he has been averaging well over 1,000 pounds.

This performance unofficially establishes him in the same select circle with Davis and the other elite who have scored 1,000 or better. However, Schemansky's power can best be

Wood You Believe It?

America's forests cover about 624 million acres, an area as large as all the States east of the Mississippi River, plus Kansas and Louisiana. This forest acreage is half again as large as that devoted to raising foods and textiles, and in it there is enough saw timber standing to build a six-room house for every man, woman and child in the United States. Farmers and other small owners hold title to 57 percent; 25 percent is owned by local, State and Federal governments; industry owns 18 percent of these forest lands.

estimated when you discover that he is by far the lightest man ever to top 1,000 pounds. Most of these supermen scale in at 230 or better. Recently he beat Davis' record in the dead lift. This is not an Olympic lift but it is regarded as the test of a super-strong man.

The other aspirant to Davis' throne is Jim Bradford of the U.S. Army. Unlike Schemansky, Bradford is a full-fledged heavyweight who scales in at about 295. Although he hasn't had the chance to compete as often as his rivals, his performances are impressive. Bradford's top score for the three basic lifts now stands at 936½ pounds. Hoffman says that he'll be a top heavyweight when he gets to training regularly.

Among the light-heavyweights there are two strong performers. The first is Clyde Emrich, a young soldier who was the dark horse of the last nationals. He quietly worked his way into the finals and then proceeded to lift the champ off the throne. Emrich will be of great help in future in-

ternational meets. And in the same division, Stan Stanczyk, who holds three world records, is back in training.

The third really big gun in Hoffman's arsenal, in addition to Davis and Schemansky, is Pete George, who holds the World Middleweight Championship. This 165-pounder is rated as the greatest clean-and-jerk lifter in the world, surpassing even Davis. George can clean and jerk 364½ pounds, or 34½ pounds more than double his bodyweight. Davis misses double his bodyweight by 58 pounds. The world middleweight champ could clean more than 300 pounds when he was just fifteen years old and he won a world championship at seventeen. Since then he has taken a series of national championships and has set numerous world and Olympic records.

Coming up strong is a quartet of Hoffman's dark horses.


Dave Sheppard, who once tied Pete George for national and world middleweight honors, is busy moving up into heavier competition. And Joe Pitman, 1950 World's Lightweight Champion, is back in action again. Speaking of Pitman, Bob Hoffman says, "He's one of America's weightlifting immortals. The best natural lightweight we have in this country, he defeated Russian and Egyptian middleweights who trained down expressly to take his title."

Among the little men are Yaz Kuzuhara and Dick Greenwalt. Yaz is the national YMCA featherweight champ who is expected to break into the big picture soon. Meanwhile, the national 1950 featherweight champion, Dick Greenwalt, is in the Army; Hoffman just hopes that he can stay in shape and come out to compete in the foreign meets.

These are the cream of the Hoffman crop. But beneath this top level of lifters there are dozens of others in training. Meanwhile, Bob keeps scouring the bushes for talent and sends out communiqués through *Strength and Health*, and almost literally leaves no stone unturned when it comes to discovering talent.

Before the last Olympics, in an obvious blast at the pure-physique boys, he said, "If the weight-lifting countries where they don't have a 'Mr. This or That' beat us at the Olympics, they really will have a right to laugh at our young men looking at their muscles in mirrors."

As a result of the Olympics, Hoffman doesn't have to take laughter from any man, and at an age when most men are getting ready for the rocking-chair and the pleasures of retirement, the big mogul of muscle rolls on beating the drums for strength and health and the prestige of the United States. ■



A little more than ten years ago, René Belbenoit wrote a book called "Dry Guillotine" which became an immediate and sensational best-seller. The book, describing Belbenoit's life as a convict in the Penal Colony of French Guiana—better known as Devil's Island—has been credited with being at least partly responsible for France's decision to abandon Devil's Island as a correctional institution, in 1944.

TO OUR READERS :

During Belbenoit's fifteen years as a prisoner on Devil's Island, he made five attempts to escape, four of which were unsuccessful due mainly to the virtual impossibility of a man's having any hope of accomplishment against the two great barriers to successful escape from Devil's Island—the jungle and the sea. On the fifth attempt, Belbenoit made it.

On the next page, under the title "Forbidden Trails," Belbenoit tells for the first time the dramatic story of this final flight to freedom, a harrowing and ever-fascinating account of one man's grim two-year struggle against the elements, against nature, against his fellowmen. We proudly and justifiably print it as one of the most exciting true adventures ever published.

A word in passing: Your editors disagree on occasion with some of Belbenoit's facts as he has set them down, particularly as regards certain of his dates; and one or two of these, you will observe, have been questioned with marginal notes. Even if every word of the story were pure fiction, however, we'd still regard it as one of the top jobs of adventure writing of the decade, and we print it with that thought in mind.

We hope you like it as much as we did.

The Editors

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

FORBIDDEN TRAILS



■ By **RENÉ BELBENOIT**

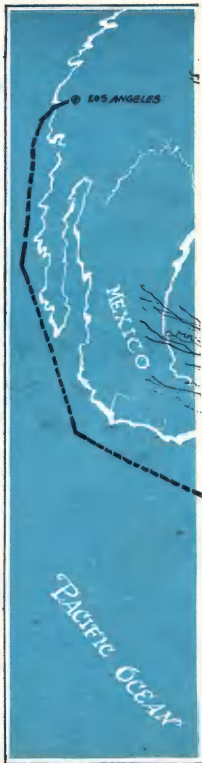
Author of "Dry Guillotine"
and "Hell on Trial"

TWENTY-FIVE MILES UP THE MARONI RIVER, borderline between Dutch and French Guiana, a strange town emerges from the dense jungle. A cluster of stores, houses and shacks steaming in the tropical heat, this is Saint Laurent du Maroni, seat of the former French Penal Colony, better known to the rest of the world as Devil's Island.

Saint Laurent was born of crime. The first building was the prison, and, perhaps because of the suffocating heat, the Commandant of the new prison christened the town after the martyred saint who was placed on a bed of burning coals.

Until 1944, when France discontinued Devil's Island as a penal colony and repatriated all its prisoner inhabitants, Saint Laurent also was populated by crime. The majority of the residents were convicts and "libérés"—freed convicts who were forced to live in exile in the colony after they had served their prison sentences.

Saint Laurent also was supported by crime. The civil population was composed of prison officials and a few merchants, whose principal customers were convicts or libérés.



Straggling along the river for about a mile, the town was surrounded by the ever-encroaching jungle, through which there were only two roads. The first ran northward to the terrible Camp Charvein, for "incorrigibles"—convicts who had escaped several times or had committed crimes while in the Colony. The second road went southward to Camp St. Jean, for "relégues," the riffraff of France, convicted on four counts of petty larceny and forced to live in immoral squalor in jungle barracks. These two roads, each about twelve miles long, were owned by the prison administration and civilian traffic was prohibited.

Here once lived as many as 2,500 souls: about a thousand convicts, nearly as many libérés, and five or six hundred civilians, all carefully segregated in three separate sections of the town.

The Official Quarter was strictly reserved for the prison officials and their families. Here, where libérés were never permitted, were located the public buildings, the school, bank, church, postoffice, etc.

In the town proper lived the rest of the civilians: the merchants, Chinese for the most part; the Negroes, who would hunt and fish in the neighborhood, and the Saramacas Indians, who used to rent their pirogues and who had a monopoly on the river traffic.

Finally there was the third quarter, the most crowded, the most picturesque and also the most tragic—the "village."

In a hundred old wooden barracks and native huts in the village, structures roofed with palm fronds or flattened gasoline cans, nearly a thousand libérés used to exist in unbelievable squalor and misery.

Here the problem of food and shelter became a mighty one. Creatures who once were men had degenerated into a species of animal. Crime ran rampant and morals were non-existent in the unrelenting struggle for food to preserve life.

There was only one real and official business in St. Laurent—La Société Forestière du Maroni, which was run by an ex-guard who retired with a fortune, made no one knew how. With such a high-sounding name, the firm should have been the backbone of the community and the source of employment for many libérés. Unfortunately, only about thirty were employed, this because of a contract with the administration, which supplied one hundred healthy convicts each day to do the major portion of the work.

Add to these the fifty who were employed as street or cesspool cleaners, and fifteen or twenty who were serv-

ants to the guards or Chinese merchants, and the total was complete—about one hundred out of a thousand libérés earning just enough for food, and for the almost unheard-of luxury of shelter for the night.

But many were the schemes devised by these desperate men. Once in a while a prisoner had money sent from home; but, as the convicts were not allowed to receive money, they would have it sent in care of a libéré, who then deducted twenty or twenty-five percent for this service.

Or there was the hospital. The doctors knew well the dilemma of these sick and starving men, and managed to reserve thirty beds for them. The sickest were allowed to stay a week or two, during which time they were fed and permitted to sleep in a bed.

And, as a last resort, there was the prison. When a libéré was on the verge of starving, and had no chance to be hospitalized, he sometimes would insult the first guard he met in the street, an offense carrying a penalty of thirty days in jail. For a month the libéré then would have a plate of beans and a piece of bread every day, and shelter for the night.

In spite of these opportunities, however, at least half of the libérés used to lounge along the streets of Saint Laurent, eyes haggard, stomachs empty. Barefooted, wearing tattered pants and a straw hat, undermined by fever and dysentery, they always were underfoot, hoping to find a luckier comrade who would give them a few sous for a piece of bread and cheese.

At night, they would line up at the door of the prison for scraps from the convicts' dinner. There usually was little of this, except on the days that rice was served, rice so foul the convicts refused to touch it. Forgetful of the days when, as convicts, they themselves had refused this fare, these hapless men would pounce on it and eat it with avidity.

How well they had learned the truth of the Devil's Island saying: "The day of freedom is only the beginning of the expiation."

True, there was escape. But that also offered great problems. An escape from Guiana was not like an escape from a modern prison. There were no walls to scale and no gates to open, no guards with machine-guns and revolvers. But two sentinels, more vigilant than any human, barred the way—the jungle and the sea.

Escape through the jungle to Brazil or Venezuela required a trip of six or seven months through almost impenetrable jungle, an impossible feat.

The sea offered more encouragement. Of the thousands who tried it,

perhaps fifty succeeded—only to be caught and returned to Guiana. For if to leave was comparatively easy, to reach one's destination and to stay there undetected was quite another story.

First, there were the dangers of the voyage. A thousand to fifteen hundred miles in the open sea in an Indian pirogue, at the mercy of the elements, was an adventure no sane man would attempt, not for all the gold in the world. But convicts tried it, for life and freedom cannot be measured in money.

Then, there was the problem of where to go. The neighboring Guianas, Dutch and British, used to track down all fugitives with man-hunting squads of police, and they gave bounties to the natives for all captures. Trinidad permitted them to land and stay for a few weeks, but then they were obliged to continue on. Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and all the other South American countries, arrested them and deported them to Guiana.

If the fugitive landed on a beach at night and tried to sneak into the country to live under cover, the difficulties to surmount were innumerable. He didn't speak the language, he had no clothes, money, passport or identification papers. Further, to open his mouth and betray his nationality was to be caught. There had been so many attempted escapes that, in that part of the world at that time, to be French was to be an escaped criminal.

Finally, the would-be fugitive had to have courage, hope and determination, qualities which long since had been drained from him.

EVEN those who had served short terms, and could return to France in a few years, soon lost hope when they saw the impossibility of a libéré earning the necessary 2,000 francs to buy a ticket home.

Guiana thus was their downfall: they were lost men, and they had no illusions about the future. After years of punishment, improper food and hard work, they were turned out to starve. What wonder that they became little more than animals snarling over a crust of bread, or watching the days pass with apathetic eyes?

When, by chance, they acquired a few francs—on boat day or as the result of some theft or other crime, they drank. The synthetic rum, sold by the Chinese, poisoned mind and body, but what did it matter? For a little while they could forget their misery. In the dirty holes run by the libérés, they would join in drunken song, tell stories and quarrel. Knives appeared in drunken hands and blood ran, the screams of the victims min-

Illustrated by RAY HOULIHAN

gling with the cries of the little red monkeys in the jungle.

In the morning, the infirmiry attendants came with a stretcher to pick up the body. In the prison office a clerk closed the dossier of the unfortunate (or fortunate) one, and on the cover, in big red letters, he wrote: "DECEDE."

In the evening, a little cart, pulled by one convict and pushed by another, took the corpse to the cemetery, the "bambous." Not even a cross marked his grave. No one missed him. His miseries were over.

Chapter One

THE RAIN RATTLED gustily on the tin roof of my hut. In the oppressive heat of the smoky room, three of us sat around a crude table, drinking wine. The yellow light from an oil lamp brought out the red-and-blue tattoo-marks on the face of the speaker.

"I saw Casquette this afternoon," Bebert raised a brawny arm and drained his glass in one gulp. "He wants to escape, too. He'll let us use his canoe if we'll take him with us."

I poured myself a glass of wine before I spoke. "How did he find out about it? Did you tell him?"

"No," answered the big man. "Everybody in the 'village' knows about it. It's no secret."

"Is his pirogue any good?" This question came from Dadar, the third member of our group, a smooth-faced young fellow who looked about 18. He was really 23 and had served five years for breaking into a house along with a gang of kids.

"It's the best one in the village; it's eighteen feet long with a brand-new sail." Bebert pushed his glass over to be refilled, but I ignored the gesture. He became mean and a little too quick with his knife when drunk, and I wanted no trouble tonight.

"What did you tell him?" I asked. "Nothing. He said he'd come over tonight. He ought to be along any time now."

As he spoke, a knock sounded. Bebert's hairy paw reached for the knife in his belt as I walked toward the door.

"Who's there?" I called. "Casquette," came the muffled reply. I opened the door and a heavy-set, round-faced man came in. He took off his straw hat and shook the water from the brim.

"Hello," he said cheerily. "How's every little thing?"

"We are all right," I answered, pouring a glass of wine for him while Dadar brought another box over to the table. "How's the butcher business?"

"Oh, I'm doing fine." The fat man grinned, his gray hair glinting in the lamplight. "But I'm sick of this place. I want to escape with you. Didn't Bebert tell you?"

I had known Casquette for many years, but I had not seen him lately. His jolly good humor was unimpaired by his years in the Colony. Probably his permanent job as butcher had something to do with it. He would make a good addition to our escape party.

"Yes, Bebert told us you had a canoe we could use. It's a deal, but you have to understand that I'm in charge of the escape."

"That's all right with me," Casquette chuckled. "Who else is going?"

"Just the four of us and Panama."

"Panama?" he repeated in surprise. "Yes," I replied. "He's all right. He speaks Spanish and knows Colombia and Panama. He'll be useful to us."

"Who's going to handle the boat?" asked the boat owner.

"Can't you do it?"

He shook his head. "No. I don't know too much about it. In a pinch I can relieve the man at the tiller, but I wouldn't be able to handle it in rough weather. We'll have to get a good sailor to go with us."

"I know somebody," broke in Bebert. "Chiffiot will be out in three or four days."

"Who's he?" As Casquette raised his glass, his chubby arm showed that he, too, bore the marks of a sojourn in the African military prisons—intricate tattooing.

"You don't know him," answered Bebert. "He's a new one—been here only a couple of years."

"What's he in for?" asked Dadar with youthful curiosity.

"He killed some Congo chief's son in Montmartre. The guy was trying to steal his woman." Bebert made an expressive gesture with his ever-ready knife.

"Well, if he wants to go with us," I said, "bring him over as soon as he gets out, and I'll talk with him."

Bebert nodded his shaggy head in assent.

"That makes six of us," put in Dadar anxiously, his brow wrinkled with worry. He looked as though he were responsible for the success or failure of the escape. "Won't that be too many?"

"I don't think so," Casquette smiled reassuringly. "It's a strong canoe. But we can't take any more."

"We don't want any more, anyway," I said. "Six is enough." I turned to Casquette. "Is your boat ready to go?"

"Just about. When do you want to leave?"

"In about two weeks—as soon as the mail boat leaves the Colony. Can you get it ready by then?"

"Sure. There isn't much to do to the boat, but I have to sell all the things I have. However, that gives me plenty of time."

"Bebert can help you," I said. "You two take care of that end while I arrange for the supplies."

Dadar's face shone with anticipation. "What can I do?" he asked eagerly.

"Nothing, right now," I answered. "I'll tell you what to do later."

Dadar lived with me. When he had been made a libéré a few months before, he had wandered aimlessly around the village, wondering what to do. Despite his five years in prison, he knew very little of life and his gentle nature was unable to cope with the vicious struggle for existence among the libérés. I had taken him in and let him help with my work of catching and mounting butterflies, to sell to the passengers from the ships. Since that time he had regarded me as an older brother and looked to me for the solution to all his problems.

"I'd better be getting along now," said Casquette. "I'll let you know when the boat is ready." He finished his wine and stood up. "Come on, Bebert. I'll walk back to the village with you."

With a last "bonne nuit," they walked away together in the rain, Dadar lighting the way for them with a storm lantern. When they had gone, I paced up and down the small room, thinking about the coming escape.

Now I was committed—I could not turn back. For the fifth time I was going to try the same enterprise in which I had been caught four times during my fourteen years in the Penal Colony. But this time I felt I would succeed.

I was not escaping to evade punishment. My sentence was finished—in fact, my sentence had been completed four years before, when I had become a libéré for the first time after a term of eight years. My liberty had not lasted long.

ON the authority of the Governor, I had left the Penal Colony and gone to Panama. Later I had returned to France, hoping to receive a full pardon which would release me from life-residence in the Colony. Not only had the pardon been refused, but I had been condemned to an additional three years at hard labor for escaping. Ignoring the fact that I had been given permission to leave and had not escaped, the administration officials apparently were intent on revenging themselves upon me for a series of articles I had written for the French

press which exposed conditions in the Colony.

I had served my three years and had become a libéré again only three months before.

No, I had no fear of failure this time. Now I was no longer a convict escaping punishment, but a man fleeing injustice.

Absent-mindedly, I had stopped my restless pacing and was riffling through a stack of papers on the shelf, memoirs written during my years of misery. It was a detailed account of the life of the convicts on Devil's Island, a formidable record of the grimmest prison on earth. Here was my weapon. Here was the means with which I would fight to abolish this terrible place, and save the lives and reason of other miserable men who would come to suffer the hardships I had endured and had by a miracle survived . . . hardships that had left their lasting marks on my emaciated body.

I was 35 years old, but I looked 50. I was nothing but skin and bone, weighing about a hundred pounds. But I was alive—alive to escape and to destroy the hell that had failed to destroy me!

At that moment Dadar returned, shaking the water from his hat and clothes. He started asking me excited questions about our forthcoming enterprise. We talked until late in the night, while the rain continued its endless pattering on the tin roof.

That was the 18th of April, 1935.

Chapter Two

THE MAIL BOAT was due on May 1st, continuing up the coast to Cayenne the next day. Three days later it would return to St. Laurent, embarking for France on the 6th of May. We intended to leave the day after.

On the evening of the 1st, the day the boat landed, I was writing a letter to my mother while I waited for Dadar to return from his work in the jungle. Although it was only six o'clock, the quick tropic night had fallen, and it was dark outside. Suddenly I heard a knock on the door; I went to open it.

A convict was standing there. I recognized him as a fellow I had known in the camps. I looked out to see if there were any guards or turnkeys around. Seeing nothing suspicious, I had him come in and I locked the door.

"What do you want?" I demanded. "I hear you're going to escape at the end of the week," he replied. "I have five hundred francs. How about dealing me in?"

"Who told you that?" I asked, astonished.

"Everyone's talking about it at camp. Bebert and Casquette are going with you as soon as the next boat leaves," he answered. "You've known me for many years, Belbenoit. We're old friends, you and I. Take me with you. I have five hundred francs to pay my way. Give me a chance to get free."

"We're not going for several weeks," I said. "And there's six of us already—the boat won't hold any more. But I promise I'll get in touch with you if anyone decides not to go."

The prison clock began to ring curfew, time for all convicts to report to camp.

"You have to get back," I said, opening the door and looking around to see if anyone was watching. "The coast is clear. You can go now."

"Don't forget, Belbenoit," he said as he turned away.

I closed the door behind him and began to pace up and down the room. This was the second convict to come here with the same idea, and I was beginning to worry. I was aware that all the libérés in the village knew about our plans. My companions had told their friends, and these had of course told others. But that the whole prison knew the very date of our departure appalled me.

If they knew, there was no reason why the administration might not know also. Something had to be done—and that something as quickly as possible.

A few minutes later Dadar came in from his butterfly hunting.

"Go get Casquette and tell him I want to see him right away."

Dadar put his butterfly net on the shelf and went off without a word. He returned almost immediately with the massive butcher.

"Let's go outside and talk," I said. "Dadar, you stay here. We won't be long."

A few steps from the cabin we stopped and Casquette turned to me. "What's up?"

"We are leaving tomorrow evening, as soon as the boat pulls out for Cayenne."

"Tomorrow evening? Are you crazy. The boat'll catch up to us before we get to British Guiana!"

No escape party ever had left while the mail boat was in the vicinity. It was too dangerous, for the boat was likely to catch sight of them. The administration knew this and the usual guard was relaxed, because no convict, however desperate, would be stupid enough to run such a risk. It was just this assurance that I relied upon to protect us.

"No," I replied, "we're sailing straight out from shore for twenty-four hours, and after that we won't be near the coast. The boat will have

to follow the coast to put in at Paramaribo and British Guiana. It'll never see us."

"But why the sudden change of plan?" asked Casquette.

"Everyone knows when we're supposed to leave. Not only the libérés, but the prisoners in the camps. It's a certainty the administration has caught wind of it, too. If we leave in four days, after the boat goes, they'll put a guard on us and we'll be picked up at the mouth of the river."

"Have you told the others?"

"No. There's no need. If they knew, they might talk. I've told you because you have some property to sell and you'll have to clear up everything tonight. Tomorrow, bring the canoe down to Serpent Creek. I'm going to see the Chinaman right now to order the supplies. I'll have him bring them to you at the creek."

CASQUETTE reflected a moment. "All right. I'll do it. What time will the Chink come?"

"Between ten o'clock and noon. What time is low tide tomorrow?"

"About five o'clock," said Casquette.

"It gets dark about six. We can leave right after dark and make the mouth of the river by eleven, stay overnight there and leave on the tide before dawn."

"Okay," said Casquette. He left me at the door, and I went in to get the list of supplies for the trip.

Choung, the Chinese, had a grocery store and specialized in supplies for escape parties. He did not have a good reputation; for each rumor that he dealt fairly, there were two to the contrary. Several fugitives had been wrecked at the mouth of the Maroni because he had sold them a boat full of holes, and he was said to have killed a convict who had just received a large sum of money from his family.

However, I was not disturbed. I had had some dealings with him in the butterfly business, and I was not asking him to organize an escape. I only wanted him to deliver some provisions about two miles from St. Laurent, an affair entailing no risks and on which he would make a hundred francs in less than an hour.

The grocery was empty of customers when I walked in. Handing him the list, I asked how much it would cost. He calculated the amount rapidly on his abacus.

"Two hundred and eighty francs," he said.

"Can you deliver it tomorrow morning at Serpent Creek?"

"Tomorrow? What time?"

"Between ten o'clock and noon. Casquette will be there to receive it."

"You go to gold mines?" he said, smiling.

"Sure, to the gold mines."
"Maybe to gold mines in Venezuela?" he insinuated.

"Never mind where," I replied. "Whether it's gold mines of Venezuela or the gold mines of China, it's none of your business!"

"Allright, allright," he said soothingly. "You pay now?"

"Yes. How much commission do you want?"

I paid him the 280 francs for the supplies and 50 francs for his commission, and, with a final admonishment about the time of delivery, went out.

The next day the mail boat arrived and I sent Dadar aboard with the butterflies he still had.

"Sell them at any price," I instructed. "If there aren't any passengers, sell them to the crew. We must get rid of them even at a loss."

"But why?" queried Dadar. "Why don't you wait until the boat comes back? There'll be some passengers then and we can make more money."

"Never mind why. Just sell them now. When the boat comes back we'll have more important things to do."

While he went down to the boat, I took a side trail into the jungle to see if the Chinese was doing as he had promised. I watched him load his pirogue, then walked back to the village to purchase the last articles we needed.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, Casquette arrived.

"Everything is set," he reported. "The supplies are in the canoe and I brought down a few sacks of charcoal and a little brazier."

"That's fine," I replied. "I've sent Dadar down to sell everything I had left. Maybe he'll make enough on them to buy a couple of bottles of rum for the trip."

I wrote a few letters to my friends and family in France, telling them of the projected escape.

About four o'clock Dadar returned; he had sold everything, as I had ordered, and at a fair price, too.

"Sit down a minute, Dadar," I said. "I want to talk to you. We're leaving tonight after dinner. There's still time for you to change your mind. I'll leave you 150 francs if you want to stay here. That'll be enough to feed you until you find something to do. Think seriously about it, now. You're young and in four years your *doublage* will be over and you can go back to France. If you go with us, there's no certainty that we'll succeed, and, even if we do, you'll be a fugitive for the rest of your life."

"I know already what I want to do," said Dadar almost defiantly. "I've been out six months and I haven't

found any work. What makes you think I could find any now? And even if I could, how could I ever earn enough to get back to France? Two thousand francs! I couldn't get that much if I stayed here a million years! I'd just end up in the prison if I stayed. Anything is better than that!"

"All right," I answered. "But I am warning you—I'll probably have to leave you in Trinidad. I expect to get some money there and go on by steamer, but I won't have enough to take you with me."

"Don't worry about me," he answered stubbornly. "I'll get along all right. But tell me," he continued, "why are we leaving tonight?"

Just then the door opened. In came Bebert, followed by the two other members of our party. Chiffot, tall, slender and young, had a bottle of wine under his arm. Panama, an impish grin on his rather weak-chinned face, was gaily recounting one of his amusing stories about life in the German prison camps during World War I.

Quietly the uncommunicative Chiffot set the bottle of wine on the table and Panama, appointing himself master of ceremonies, took charge.

"Bring out the glasses! We'll drink a toast to our leave-taking. Farewell to hell." Ostentatiously, the dapper little man pulled the cork and, draping an imaginary napkin over his arm, proceeded to pour the wine.

When the glasses were full, I exploded my bombshell. "We're leaving on the next tide!"

"Tonight!" exclaimed Panama and Bebert together.

"Yes, tonight." And I explained my reasons for advancing the date of departure.

"You should have let us know sooner," protested Bebert.

"What for? I don't want the whole colony to know what's going on!" I replied with some heat. "You fellows are already to blame for the change in plans. I don't want any more of it."

"Let's go get something to eat," put in Casquette placatingly. "We can blow ourselves tonight. Our French money won't be any good where we're going."

The thought of a good dinner soothed their ruffled feelings, and Panama, Bebert and Chiffot went off in high humor to pack their few clothes.

By five-thirty, we were all assembled in Acknina's, the squalid Chinese restaurant serving the libérés, and we discussed our plans in guarded voices, as we finished our meal. Soon it was six o'clock. The guards were all at dinner and it was dark, the best time to leave.

As prearranged, Casquette, with Bebert and Chiffot, went ahead while I paid the bill and followed with the rest. We crossed the village. The night was black and the town was poorly lighted. No one noticed our passage except a libéré who was sitting on the steps of a Chinese store listening to the radio. He called out to me, asking for a cigarette. I threw him part of a package and told him to keep it.

We reached the edge of the jungle, and hurried along a little trail that followed the Maroni. Half an hour's walk brought us to Serpent Creek. The others were there waiting for us, talking in low, tense tones.

The hour had come.

With Casquette at the tiller and I beside him, the others took paddles and we shoved out into the current. We were off.

Half an hour later we passed Saint Laurent.

"Good-by, village!" laughed Dadar, thumbing his nose at the dim lights of the town. Five other silent thoughts echoed his sentiments.

Aided by the current, and under the efforts of our four paddles, we went rapidly down the river. We reached Pigeon Island, and St. Laurent disappeared from view.

"We can smoke now," I said and lit a cigarette. Soon there were six glowing sparks in the blackness.

We passed Bull Creek which led to Camp Charvén. From time to time we encountered fishing boats and the occupants hallowed at us. In the darkness it was impossible for them to determine whether we were going fishing or escaping. I constantly listened and looked behind for any indication that we were being followed by the prison launch, but it was unlikely that the guards would know anything of our escape until daybreak. We reached the mouth of another creek.

"Cow Creek," I announced. "We'll get to 1900 Creek in an hour and spend the night there."

It was nearly eleven when we landed at 1900 Creek. We drew the canoe in under the overhanging branches and cast anchor, a heavy piece of iron that Casquette had commandeered from the old American Company, of Saut Hermine. Bebert and Panama filled the water-cask while I rearranged the packages. I noticed that a box of biscuits was missing.

"Bah!" said Bebert. "We have enough food anyway. I made the trip to Trinidad on a dozen coconuts and six bunches of bananas!"

It was impossible to go back now; and Bebert was right. We would be in Trinidad in six or seven days, and we had food for twelve.

The mosquitoes descended upon us in countless thousands, like dive bombers making a raid. Every exposed bit of skin was soon swollen and itching. It was useless to attempt to sleep, but we all were so excited we probably would have slept little anyway.

Seated in the bow of the boat, I was immersed in thought, oblivious to the enterprising insects. Tomorrow morning we would go due north, straight out from shore, for twenty-four hours, evading the dangers of the coast—the mudbanks, the whirlpools, and the police. Then west-a-quarter-north for a week, which should bring us opposite Trinidad; then due south for another day and we'd be there.

This was my last chance. There was only two possible results: Liberty or Death. But something inside me whispered that I was leaving Guiana forever—that this time I would succeed.

Chapter Three

WHEN THE SUN ROSE next morning we could see the Dutch coast in the distance. We were heading due north, out to the open sea, leaving behind us the jungle, the hell, the unhappy memories, the past—and turning toward a future that to all of us was a rosy one.

The night had passed without incident and we had left the creek an hour before dawn. In the darkness we had passed the guard post at Hattes Camp, and half an hour later we had reached the river's mouth.

Now the canoe was dancing over the waves, leaving the shore farther and farther astern.

The bow of the boat was covered with a waterproof tarpaulin from the mast forward. Under this was all our food and baggage. I had figured the voyage would take about twelve days, and had bought food for six persons for that time: 6 lbs. of coffee, 6 lbs. of sugar, 12 cans of sardines, 10 lbs. of rice, 2 lbs. of chocolate bars, 20 lbs. of bread, 10 lbs. of crackers, several cans of corned beef and condensed milk. There also were two bunches of bananas for fresh food. Our greatest expense had been for tobacco: 20 packages of cigarettes and 40 packages of tobacco. We also had two bottles of kerosene for the storm lantern and for soaking the charcoal if it became wet.

In one gasoline can I had packed my manuscript, and in another I had put the rest of my butterfly wings, several miniature guillotines, carved paper-knives and other novelties that had been made by the convicts, which I hoped to sell in Trinidad. In addition to all this, each of us had an oil-

cloth-wrapped package containing a change of clothes for our arrival.

Between the mast and the water-barrel was a space of five feet, in which three of us sat. The water-barrel took up two feet and in back of this was room for the man at the rudder, as well as two others. There was not sufficient room to lie full-length nor even to stretch our legs, and we had to rest sitting or curled up.

Just before nightfall, I opened several cans of food and lit the little charcoal stove to make coffee. When night came we were sailing across an empty sea. The shore had disappeared from view. The air became cooler as the wind began to blow, and little whitecaps sparkled in the darkness.

Casquette took the tiller, with Dadar and Panama to keep him company until midnight, when Chiffot would relieve him, with Dadar and myself. Casquette was enthused over his new-found capacities. He had never sailed a boat at sea before, but during the day, under Chiffot's tutelage, he had discovered that he was a natural-born sailor.

Crouched in the makeshift cockpit, the rest of us tried to sleep. Every few moments a wave would break over the bow, showering us with icy water. Our blankets and clothes soon were soaked and one of us had to keep bailing constantly.

At dawn I made coffee, and when the sun began to warm us with its rays we took off our clothes and hung them up to dry.

We had been sailing for twenty-four hours and should be about a hundred miles out to sea. Now was the time to change our course and go west-a-quarter-north to parallel the coast of the Guianas. We reset the sail, but there was very little wind and the canoe proceeded at a snail's pace.

Bebert, Casquette and I exchanged reminiscences of Paris: Paris of the old days, when life was bright and beautiful for all of us. The gaiety and charm of her atmosphere, the friendliness of her people, the exquisite beauty of her monuments and parks; and Paris after dark, when the Montmartre and the Clichy districts came to life. How young we were then and how lovely it all was! Unhappiness and trouble had been obliterated by time, and all we remembered was the pleasantness.

We sang together, all the old songs of pre-war vintage, Casquette's deep rolling bass and my tenor leading the rest. Dadar tried to follow us, but he knew none of the songs we knew, and those he was familiar with were new to us. They had come out since we had been condemned to Guiana.

Chiffot alone was silent. Like Dadar, he knew none of the old songs

and he was disinclined to talk about himself. He sat at the tiller, watching the sea, lost in his private thoughts. Always even-tempered, but never jovial, he handled the boat competently, and throughout our voyage, though he was not always courageous in other situations, whenever sea or elements threatened, he sat calm and undisturbed, pursuing his way serenely through the danger.

So the day passed. We were all in a happy mood, grateful to have escaped from misery and glooming in our freedom. All was song and laughter. Soon we would be in Trinidad and safe.

That night the sun set in a burst of flame. We seemed to be in a world of fire. Even the sea had taken on the red of molten lava. It grew sultry hot and we all felt the oppression of the atmosphere.

"That means we're in for a good blow," said Chiffot, looking up at the crimson sky.

As he had foretold, the wind rose as the night deepened. Our little canoe began to bounce on the waves. At first the motion was pleasant, but soon the boat was spanking down with force enough to jolt us in our seats.

Chiffot was at the tiller and I sat beside him, ready to roll cigarettes as he needed them. The tiny compass was in my hand, but the North Star was my guide. I kept it over my right shoulder as we drove toward the west.

The water sloshed over the sides at each plunge of the boat, drenching us completely. The others took turns bailing.

By midnight, when Casquette was to replace Chiffot, the canoe was heaving so madly that an exchange of seats would have swamped us, so Chiffot kept his place. He was frozen to the tiller with cold and fatigue, and I lighted him innumerable cigarettes, talking and singing incessantly to keep him awake.

The slow hours dragged by. With dawn, the wind slackened; at last we could stand up and stretch our stiffened muscles. Casquette took over at the helm and I made coffee.

The sun came up warm and bright and we dried our clothes while we napped as well as we could in our cramped positions.

"We'd better get what sleep we can today," warned Chiffot. "Tonight will be worse than the last."

"There's one thing about it, though," remarked Dadar, with youthful optimism. "If we make as much time as we did last night we'll be in Trinidad in four days and break all the records!"

Chiffot's knowledge of the sea proved accurate. At sunset we were floating in a blood-red sea. The sail

flapped dismally as we lay becalmed in a fiery furnace, waiting for the night and the wind.

Chiffot and I took our places in the stern, and by dark the pirogue was flying over the water at an incredible speed. Clouds gradually blotted out the stars and we went lunging through inky blackness. From time to time I consulted the compass with the aid of a flashlight.

"We ought to get the sail down," yelled Chiffot in my ear, "but if we move around we're likely to swamp."

THE wind was increasing in fury and the ocean became more turbulent than ever. I consulted the compass more and more frequently.

"Never mind that," shouted Chiffot, "trying to make himself heard above the storm. 'Light me a cigarette. I can't go anywhere except before the wind, anyhow.'"

I put the compass down on the seat between us while I reached into my pocket to get the tobacco. At that moment an angry wave swept across the stern and carried the compass into the sea.

"The compass—it's gone!" I yelled above the howling wind.

"Bah! It wasn't much good anyway," yelled Chiffot in return. "We can't do anything in this storm, and if it's clear we can use the stars."

His hat flapping about his ears and his blanket hunched around his shoulders, Chiffot was ready to drop with fatigue. Two nights without relief, using all of his force to keep the rudder from being torn out of his grasp by the raging sea, was almost too much for even his great strength.

"I don't know if I can hold out till morning—I'm horribly tired. My hands and arms are numb." Chiffot's voice came to me in gusts.

"Hold on a little longer," I encouraged. "Here's a cigarette. Maybe the wind will go down enough so Casquette can relieve you."

The night seemed endless. The bottom of the canoe was full of water. Bebert and Dadar bailed without stopping. The leaks in the canoe grew steadily larger as it pounded against the sea. At times the water came in faster than the men could bail it out. We all watched the rising water anxiously, and sighed with relief when the men again made headway against the incoming flood.

The wind blew still harder and the water poured over the sides. Still it rose, and our situation was critical. We were miles from shore, in a mere coconut-shell, on an ocean now gone mad.

"We've got to get that sail down," roared Chiffot, stirred out of his torpor by the imminent danger. "If we don't, we're gone, sure!"

Casquette guessed what Chiffot had said and started to move toward the bow. The boat listed and took in more water. Dadar and Panama bailed more frantically. Casquette sat down again carefully; he could never make it to the sail without upsetting the boat. The water was nearly to our knees, and the boat was barely afloat. Then Panama yelled to me, cupping his hands over his mouth: "Dadar . . . lightest . . . make it!"

I nodded my head. Yes, Dadar was the lightest of us; he might be able to reach the mast and cut the sail down. I tossed my knife to Panama, but the boat made a sudden jerk and the knife followed the compass into the sea.

"Take mine," said Chiffot; "it's in my belt." I felt around under his blanket and finally found the knife. This time I slid it down the center of the boat. It was in the water, but a few seconds' search brought it up.

Bebert took Dadar's bailing can, and, as Dadar carefully rose to his feet, Casquette and Panama shifted their weight to balance the boat. Slowly Dadar worked his way toward the mast. He began hacking at the hal-yard. With a terrific lunge, the canoe buried her nose in an oncoming wave. When it had passed, there was an Indian pile in the cockpit with Dadar on top. It was a miracle how we remained upright, much less afloat.

Dadar started out again. Little by little he gained the mast and cut the rope. Weakened by his earlier efforts, it gave way quickly and the sail tumbled to the deck, burying him.

Panama and Casquette grabbed frantically at the sail to keep it from going overboard. The pirogue rocked with their efforts, but the lowering of the sail had slackened our onward rush, and we were not shipping so much water.

Soon the sail was made fast and we were riding much higher in the water.

All the rest of the night we rolled and pitched, at the mercy of wind and sea. When the wind finally died down in the morning we were exhausted, but glad to be alive and exceedingly grateful that the night was finally over.

Chapter Four

"WE OUGHT TO BE just opposite Georgetown, the capital of British Guiana," I remarked. "If we keep on like this, we'll be in Trinidad in another two days."

"We're still going in the right direction, anyway," said Panama.

"Yes, we are now," said Bebert gloomily. "But how were we going when it was dark and the wind was blowing? I think we ought to go ashore and find out where we are."

"You fool!" I exploded. "Three days ago we went twenty-four hours out from shore to be safe. Now you want to go back again just to see where we are! We are not going to do it! We're keeping on our course to the west. We lost a full day getting away from the coast to avoid the mudbanks and the police, and now you want to waste another going back," I argued. "What if we land in the Nickery Mudbanks?"

"We can't go on without a compass," said Casquette decidedly.

The others agreed and I was alone in my opinion.

"Do as you like," I said disgustedly. "But remember, nine out of ten escapes fail because they follow the coast!"

"We'll just go close enough to see where we are, then come back out again," said Chiffot.

I said nothing, but flung myself down in the bottom of the boat to sleep. The others fixed the sail and put about to the south.

The understanding that had existed between us was gone. There was a strained silence instead of the comradely exchange of jokes and stories. No one sang. If anyone talked, it was only to make some disparaging remark or to snap back.

IT was about three o'clock in the afternoon when Casquette, going to relieve Chiffot at the tiller, exclaimed: "Look! The water is all yellow! There must be a strong current here."

"Look over there!" cried Dadar, pointing at a black object sticking out of the water. "It looks like a tree!"

"There's another there!"

"And another here!"

"They're all around us—look there!" said Chiffot. "A minute ago there wasn't a thing in sight and now we're surrounded by them."

"We're in the Nickery Mudbanks and the tide is going down fast!" shouted Casquette. "Pull down the sail!"

The sail was lowered and the anchor cast overboard. The tide continued to fall, and hundreds of tree-trunks emerged from the sea. Panama plunged a paddle into the water. It was less than three feet deep, and when he pulled the paddle out again, the end of it was covered with sticky ooze.

"We'll be lucky to get out of here," I said bitterly. "I told you so this morning. But you had to go toward shore. Now we're here. God only knows if we'll get out again!"

"You are not so smart," snapped Bebert. "You lost the compass!"

"If you hadn't done that we wouldn't have had to come here to find out where we were!" added Dadar.

"Oh, we'll get out all right," said Casquette. "It's not so bad. We have an anchor."

"Not so bad!" I exclaimed. "Do you know what you're talking about? An anchor won't save us. More men have died in this mud than you can count. It's just like quicksand. All the silt from the Nickery River makes a bar out here and everything sticks in it like glue!"

"That's just the tales of a cowardly bunch of guys that didn't know how to work," argued Bebert. "You don't know everything! All we have to do is get out and push."

"You crazy fool!" I cried. "You will just sink. This mud is fifteen feet deep and you can't swim in it."

"Listen to the little pipsqueak talk!" glibed Bebert. "We wouldn't even be here if he hadn't lost the compass. Come on, guys, let's get out and push. Three on a side and take it easy!"

By this time the tide was completely out and the boat lay on a bed of mud, her bow caught between two enormous tree-trunks.

Bebert pulled up his trousers and went over the side, hanging on to the gunwale. In a second he was up to his shoulders in mud.

"Help! Help! I'm sinking!" he shouted.

Chifflof and Casquette each grabbed an arm and started to pull, while Dadar, Panama and I balanced the canoe.

They pulled and tugged, but it was slow work. The mud seemed to suck at Bebert like something alive. The boat tipped and the three of us leaned way out over the other side, trying desperately to keep the boat from turning over.

Whoosh! Thuck! Suddenly Bebert came free and the boat rocked, then settled still deeper in the mire.

"We can't do it like that!" gasped Bebert, as he lay panting in the bottom of the canoe. "That mud's like melted grease!"

I suddenly remembered a story an old convict had told me. He had been caught in the Nickery with eight others and had been lucky enough to escape. "To cross the mud," he had told me, "you have to lie out full-length on your stomach, with your legs spread apart. Then you put one leg down slowly and use it as a lever."

I told the rest about this method and we decided to try it.

Casquette went first, a rope tied around his chest so we could pull him out. He sank to his waist, he stepped in, but after he had thrown himself forward, his body seemed to find a level. Pushing with one leg, he went slowly ahead and pulled himself up on a tree a few feet ahead of the canoe.

"It's safe enough," he called. "Someone can help me. I know I can't move the boat alone."

Bebert went to his aid. Standing on the tree, they heaved with all their might, but the canoe refused to budge.

"That's not going to work either," I said. "Come on back. We'll have to wait until high tide and try again."

Covered with slime, Bebert and Casquette climbed back into the canoe.

"We'll have to stay here all night," I said. "The tide is high about midnight. It's low again about six, and our only chance is to get out to sea in that time."

Night fell and thousands of mosquitoes attacked us with a vengeance. We slapped at them, rocking the boat and working it deeper into the mud with each move. I lighted the charcoal burner and covered the opening with caulking. The stench was terrible and we coughed and sputtered with the smoke, but it drove away some of the insects.

The tide began to rise and soon there was water around the canoe. But it did not float. It remained stuck fast in the mire, while the water rose higher and higher.

"It's not going to float with all this weight in it," I declared, "and we're going to have to do something quickly, before the water starts coming over the side. Casquette, you and Bebert had better work over to that tree and pull on the canoe while the rest of us get out to lighten the load."

Casquette and Bebert took a line with them and swam over to the tree. The rest of us climbed up on the trunks at the bow of the boat and tried to work it free as they pulled. We tried first to push it back but it would not move. We rocked it back and forth, but our movements earlier had wedged it firmly into the mud.

The water rose higher. We worked with feverish haste, but still the boat remained as solid as a rock. If anything, the suction seemed to be pulling us down.

"Casquette," I called, "you and Bebert come over here and help the others. I'm going to swim over beside the boat and try to free it with a paddle as a lever. If we can only release the suction under the hull, it'll float. The water is high enough now. You fellows rock the boat as I try to pry it loose." I grabbed a paddle from the cockpit and went over the side. "When I say 'go' put everything you've got into one shove. All right—go! That's it! I think she moved a bit that time!"

We all took a deep breath and sized up the situation.

"I don't think it's any higher than it was before. We'd better save our

strength to fight the mud," Bebert dissented. "There ought to be an easier way out than this. This pulls the very guts out of you!"

"Well, I think it's a little higher," put in Dadar. "Look over there at the bow."

Grumbling, Bebert went back to his task, and the rest followed suit. I put the paddle under as far as it would go. I meant to put superhuman effort into what I knew would be my last chance with this rebellious and unruly crew.

"All right, now—GO!"

The canoe stirred slightly and I felt the paddle slide under it. The suction was broken!

"Push! Push! Push for all you're worth!" I shouted excitedly. "We've done it! I'll keep her bow up and you can work her free. You two fellows get back over there and pull."

Our differences forgotten in the excitement, we all worked together, the sweat streaming down our backs. A few minutes more of hard pulling and tugging, and the canoe floated sluggishly. Casquette and Bebert pulled it over to their tree. The rest of us swam over to the canoe and climbed aboard. Casting anchor, to keep the rising tide from carrying us further into the swamps, we waited for the change of tide to aid us in paddling out to clear water.

By dawn we were able to raise the sail and continue along the coast of British Guiana, and by afternoon we had passed the Demerara River and anchored for the night in the Bay of Soundy.

Sailing out on the falling tide in the morning, we discovered that a strong current kept us from leaving the bay. Disgustedly, we settled down for another night of waiting until we could take advantage of the next morning's tide to paddle out of the bay.

As the sky was overcast in the morning, we decided to stay near the coast for protection. Fortunately, the storm did not materialize, but, as the wind continued strong, we kept our course along the shore.

About two o'clock in the morning of the next day, Bebert pointed to a beam of light flashing in the darkness. "Look!" he cried. "It's the Barima Lighthouse. We're at the mouth of the Orinoco!"

Chapter Five

SUNRISE SHOWED the water a brilliant green. The wind was blowing stronger, and the water was becoming rough as we approached the mouth of the river. The waves grew mountainous, often fifty or more feet from trough to crest.

The little canoe would climb to the top of each wave and then slide rapidly down the other side. In the troughs, we could see nothing but the green water piled high around us and a glimpse of blue sky.

"Look at that one!" cried Casquette as a particularly huge wave appeared before us. It seemed that we would never reach the top. We were suspended in midair for a breathless second; then we plummeted down the other side like a roller coaster.

"Whoops! There she goes!" shouted Casquette joyfully.

But we were not at ease. Since the voyage began, the ocean had never been so menacing. Bebert and Dadar were bailing unceasingly.

Then an enormous wave struck us broadside; we were buried under an avalanche of water. With the impact, we had instinctively leaned to the side opposite the sail. This was all that kept us from overturning.

"Bail faster!" I yelled.

We were in water up to our knees. A few inches more would have filled the canoe completely. Everyone snatched some sort of container and began to bail with one hand while he hung on with the other. In his hurry, Chiffot had started bailing with his straw hat. It was sometime later before anyone noticed that since his hat was full of holes, he was emptying only about a teaspoonful at a time.

The situation was critical. One more wave like that and we would be finished.

"It takes only three minutes to drown," said Casquette encouragingly. "Only three minutes of suffering, and who couldn't stand that?"

But no more came. The worst was over. We had reached the mouth of the river at the moment of high tide, and the conflicting currents had caused the great wave that our little coconut shell had surmounted. Fortunately there was a good wind, and we soon gained the other side of the mouth of the river, where the sea was more calm. . . .

Finally, we were able to set a straight course for Trinidad.

"Tomorrow morning we'll sight Trinidad," I remarked, "and by evening we'll be on dry land again."

The charcoal was soaking wet so we could not have a hot meal, but I started to open a can of corned beef while Chiffot went to get water.

"The water's salt!" he exclaimed as he spat disgustedly.

"Oh, well," I said, "we can get along without water until tomorrow, but we'd better not eat anything. It'll just make us more thirsty."

The stars appeared and it was easy to set our course, north-a-quarter-west; during the night we hoped to cover

the fifty or sixty miles that separated us from Trinidad.

But when the sun rose, no land was in sight. The wind dropped and the sail flapped, as we drifted on the empty sea.

The sun burned down and we began to get thirsty and hungry. There was no shelter from the heat. Our lips began to swell. Our clothes, which had been drenched with salt water, scratched us like sandpaper.

We grumbled and swore at the brassy sky and the blinding water that reflected the sun's rays without mercy. Panama, who had been sick nearly all the time, suffered the worst. His skin, apparently more sensitive than the rest, had deep, running sores from the blistering by wind and sun. All of us were covered with oozing blisters, but his were deep wounds, infected and bleeding.

"I'm sick of this," said Dadar. "I'm going to mix some of that sweetened condensed milk with salt water. It'll ease my thirst."

We did our best to dissuade him, but he was obstinate. A few hours later he was delirious with fever and screaming incessantly for water. We tried to relieve him by keeping his body wet with salt water, but it had scarcely any effect.

"*Water—a boire! Water—water!*" he groaned.

"Try to be patient," I soothed. "Tomorrow morning you'll be drinking coconut milk and coffee in Trinidad."

"Water—water—" he moaned in reply.

The cool of night refreshed us somewhat. The stars were bright in a velvety sky and the sea was calm. A gentle breeze filled our sail. But no one had eyes for the beauty of the night, and no one slept.

We were all straining for a glimpse of the beacon at Trinidad. But night passed and morning came, with still no sight of land.

As before, it was Bebert who first suggested that we go back to the coast again. "Let's go south today. We can go ashore, fill our water-barrel and put out to sea again."

"South!" I cried. "That's Venezuela! What's the matter with you that you want to risk arrest for a little drink of water? Are you so weak that you can't stand a little thirst? Trinidad can't be far. We're sure to reach it by night and we can stand another day."

"Trinidad? We probably passed it during the night!" he argued.

"*A boire—a boire—*" cried Dadar pitifully.

"We can't have passed it," I answered.

The others again sided with Bebert. We argued violently. Even

Dadar, in his delirium, was vaguely aware that water was under discussion. But I was adamant in my refusal to turn south.

"Turn the sail!" yelled Casquette finally.

As Chiffot let go the sheet to come about, I reached toward the bow of the boat where I had a package of my belongings. Rolled in oiled silk was a small revolver; I pulled it out and turned to the others, pointing the gun.

"Leave that sail alone!" I commanded. Turning to Bebert and Casquette, I said determinedly, "We're keeping on to Trinidad or we'll all die here! I'll shoot the first one who moves!"

Astonished, they looked at me a moment. Chiffot hesitated, then pulled on the sheet and the sail snapped back into place.

Dadar, who had been lying in the bottom of the boat, stumbled to his feet and lurched toward me.

"Water!" he cried. Then he lost his balance and tumbled against the side of the boat, nearly upsetting us.

Bebert and Casquette grabbed him. "You fool!" said Bebert. "You'll wreck us!"

DADAR was insane with fever. He continued to struggle, and the boat rocked dangerously. Casquette finally hit him behind the ear and he collapsed.

"Tie him up!" screamed Panama. "He doesn't know what he's doing! He's still struggling and he'll dump us all into the sea!"

Bebert and Panama sat on the wriggling Dadar while Casquette tied up his arms and legs. Then Bebert gave me a venomous look and said, "We've tied Dadar so he won't upset the canoe, but don't think that I'm scared of your gun!"

Turning toward Casquette, he continued, "What'll you bet that I can get that gun away from him without tipping the boat over?"

I knew Bebert; he was perfectly capable of putting his threat into execution at the risk of his life. I did not want to kill any of my companions, for I knew that they were almost out of their heads with hunger, thirst and pain.

I thought quickly. "If there's anyone here I want to kill, it's you, Bebert," I countered. "Casquette, move over to the right a little and I'll finish him."

And I spat in Bebert's face, an insult that the convicts never forgive.

Bebert glared at me but he did not move. That insult told him I was serious and would shoot to kill if necessary.

"It can't be far from Trinidad, anyway," said Panama, who was begin-

ning to be alarmed by the situation. "We can stand it another day. We won't die."

"Who does he think he is, with his gun?" muttered Bebert in a voice loud enough for me to hear.

It became unbearably hot as the sun reached its zenith. We had been blistered by sun and wind, and the blisters had become sores that burned from the salt air and water. Our mouths were so swollen from thirst we were almost unable to talk. As I sat there holding the gun, everything shimmered before my eyes and I wondered how long I would be able to hold out before I collapsed, and the others threw me overboard to the sharks.

"If we don't see Trinidad by night," mouthed Casquette through thickened lips, "we're going toward shore or I'll turn the canoe over myself!"

I did not answer. Throughout the long day, four gaunt men, half-crazy with thirst and fever, searched the horizon for a sight of land, or cast malevolent glances at a tiny man with a gun, who was as hollow-eyed and fever-maddened as themselves; while, in the bottom of the canoe, lay another, his face swollen beyond recognition, who groaned and twisted, his eternal cry for water stilled now to an indistinguishable moan.

Suddenly Casquette raised up and shouted excitedly, "Land! Over there! Land!"

"Where?" demanded Panama.

"There. Just above those low clouds. See the mountains?"

"It's Trinidad!" said Panama. Then, turning to me: "Look, René, we're here. You were right."

"Do you take me for a child?" was my sarcastic rejoinder. I thought they were trying to make me turn my head so they could jump on me and throw me overboard.

"Look, René, it's true!" insisted Panama.

I saw he was sincere, and, turning my head quickly, I glanced back over my shoulder. I saw nothing.

But he had been telling the truth. An hour later we saw it distinctly; but it was not until near dusk that we reached shore.

"Now do as you like," I said to my companions, and I threw my gun into the water. It was no longer useful to me, and it might cause trouble with the authorities.

But the sight of land had made them forget their troubles. They were all happy to have arrived safely. Only Bebert seemed to regard me with enmity. I knew him well, and I was sure he would see reason as soon as he was rested and well again, for he was not at heart a mean or vicious man.

After going along the coast for several miles we finally saw signs of life. We had been sighted by some Negroes, who came down on the beach and made friendly motions to us. We lowered the sail and slowly, pushed by the waves, approached the beach.

Three or four Negroes waded in and pulled on the boat. We were so happy to feel firm ground under our feet that we jumped out while the blacks were still pulling the boat out of the water. But our legs gave way beneath us. We stumbled and fell, dragging ourselves up onto dryer sand. "Water!" I demanded.

Two Negroes ran off to a hut near by and brought back a dozen coconuts, which they opened and gave to us. But our thirst was not so easily satisfied and they had to go back for more.

They laid Dadar out on the sand and I opened his mouth and forced a little of the coconut milk down his throat. He began to come out of his delirium, so I cut his bonds. He tried to stand, but was too weak and fell back again heavily.

We rested on the beach for some time while the inhabitants gathered around us, asking questions. I spoke and understood a few words of English, and I managed to gather that the Negroes took us for political refugees from Venezuela. We had landed only five miles from Moruga, the place where I had intended to land.

I made them understand that we wanted to spend the night here before going on to Moruga to report to the authorities in the morning. An old white-haired Negro, who seemed to be the head of the group, pointed to a cabin where we could sleep.

Dadar was much better and managed to stagger along to the house with us. The ground seemed to heave under our feet and we stumbled across the beach like drunken men.

Once in the cabin, we made signs to the Negro that we wanted food. We gave him the storm lantern in exchange, and he brought us a pot of rice which we devoured in a few seconds. This only whetted our ravenous appetites.

Since we expected the police would take us to Port-of-Spain by car, we distributed the loose equipment on the boat among the natives in return for more food.

Gorged with rice and fruit, we fell into a comatose sleep that completed our 17th day away from Guiana.

The next morning, accompanied by several curious Negroes, we started walking along the beach to Moruga. The ground still seemed to be rolling under our feet, but we were singing and laughing, happy to have arrived after seventeen long days at sea.

We were free at last—or so we thought.

Chapter Six

A COAL-BLACK NEGRO, with the build of a fighter and dressed in military uniform, took us into his office to question us. This was the sheriff of Moruga.

"He looks like Jack Johnson," whispered Casquette behind his hand.

"Where did you come from?" demanded the Negro officiously.

"French Guiana."

"Why did you land here?"

"We had no more fresh water or food."

Laboriously, he wrote down our names and the answers to his questions on the report sheet. Then, going over to the wall telephone, he called the authorities at Port-of-Spain.

"Six French fugitives—" he reported. He listened to the instructions from the other end, and when they were concluded turned to us and said we would have to continue our journey the next day in our canoe.

This was not as we had planned. We were sure we were finished with the sea and that we would be taken to Port-of-Spain by car. Discussing this new development among ourselves, we were taken to the mess hall, given a good meal and then led to a large cell, where we lost no time going to sleep.

The next morning, a policeman accompanied us to the place where we had left the canoe. It was lying on the beach as we had left it but most of the rigging had disappeared, taken by the natives.

On the arrival of the policeman, everything reappeared as if by magic, so strong was the natives' respect for the law. The blacks helped us put the boat in shape and launched it for us. The policeman was afraid to chance even the short journey to Moruga in our leaky boat, so he walked along the beach, following us, until we reached the village an hour later.

The sheriff had purchased supplies and we put them in the boat and made ready to start for Port-of-Spain. We were given 18 French rolls, 6 lbs. of crackers, 6 lbs. of sugar, 6 lbs. of rice, 6 cans of condensed milk, 6 packages of cigarettes and a package of tea.

A fisherman who knew the coast well warned us not to go more than a mile out from land, as there was a strong current which would carry us to Venezuela.

Bebert knew this part of the coast. "The coconut plantation of Mr. Agostini is twenty miles from here," he told us. "He is a Frenchman and will let us spend the night there."

The journey was not unpleasant, the weather was fine, and we were well rested. Several hours later we arrived at the Agostini plantation. We stayed there overnight, set off again the next

morning, and, as night fell the second day, saw the glimmer of lights from a hillside village.

We landed on the deserted beach, and, as I was the only one who spoke a little English, I climbed the hill and knocked on the first door.

A kinky black head with rolling eyes peeped out from behind the quickly-opened door; then the door was slammed shut in fright. Apparently my unshaven face and soggy, rumpled clothes were enough to make the servant suspicious.

I was standing there wondering what to do next when the door opened again, and a white man directed me to another house farther up the hill.

There I was invited in and a servant was sent to bring my companions. Our young host gave us tea as I explained in broken English that we had been shipwrecked on the beach and were looking for a place to spend the night.

He was just assuring us that everything would be arranged, when an automobile drove up in front, a small flag flying from the radiator cap.

"The gendarmes!" exclaimed Bebert.

Another "Jack Johnson," almost a duplicate of the one at Moruga, entered. Following his predecessor's example, he asked us the same questions. As before, he had us show him the boat.

At the beach, he ordered us to pull the boat as far as possible out of the water so the rising tide would not carry it away during the night. Then we got in the car and were taken to the Constabulary Station.

Still following the Moruga sheriff's procedure, he laboriously wrote the information on a report sheet, then went to the wall telephone and rang his superiors in Port-of-Spain.

"Six French fugitives—"

We were taken into the mess hall, given something to eat, then placed in a large cell to spend the night.

The next morning we were given the same supplies to continue our trip: 18 French rolls, 6 lbs. of crackers, 6 lbs. of sugar, 6 lbs. of rice, 6 cans of condensed milk, 6 packages of cigarettes, and a package of tea.

As the automobile reached the beach, an unexpected sight greeted our eyes—one that filled our hearts with joy.

The tide had floated the canoe during the night and the waves had thrown it up on a dead tree. The hull was crushed.

We waited to see what would happen.

The sheriff was stunned at the sight. Since he had given the orders to put the canoe in that spot, he was responsible for the damage. For several seconds he regarded the boat without

saying a word, contemplating the disaster with such a sad expression that we broke out laughing at his discomfiture.

He turned on us furiously. "Empty the boat!" he ordered.

We did as he asked, but it was useless—there was a hole completely through the hull. We looked up at him, sure that at last we would go to Port-of-Spain by automobile.

"Sit down and wait," he ordered. "I'm sending for a carpenter to fix it."

The carpenter who arrived a few minutes later was a French Negro, originally from St. Louis. Here was our chance.

"Fifteen dollars to fix the boat," offered the sheriff.

I spoke hastily to the Negro, in French. "You can't do this to a fellow Frenchman. It is your duty to refuse to fix it."



"You'll be sending us to our deaths," said Bebert, also in French. "You wouldn't dare go to sea in that leaky shell, would you?"

The carpenter looked from the sheriff to us and back again, bewildered by this by-play. The sheriff understood nothing of what was being said, but he knew we were trying to keep the man from repairing the canoe.

"Twenty dollars if it's fixed by morning!" he shouted, annoyed.

The carpenter hesitated. We were all talking at once in our efforts to make him refuse.

"Twenty dollars! Make up your mind!" repeated the officer.

The carpenter nodded in assent; twenty dollars was a large sum for a man in his position.

Discouraged, we flopped down on the sand while the carpenter went back to the village for his assistant, and his material and tools. All the rest of the afternoon, while they worked, we loaded the unhappy man

with reproaches, swearing that our deaths would be on his head and taunting him with disloyalty to his countrymen. This surely distressed the miserable carpenter; but, after all, twenty dollars is twenty dollars.

We were at Palo Secco, headquarters of a petroleum company, and most of the employees and their families came down to the beach to see the excitement. They were kind to us, bringing us candy and cigarettes, and showing great interest in our predicament. I sold them some souvenirs I had brought from Guiana and we became quite friendly. One of them, a Mrs. Scott, who had spent some years in France, invited me to her house for tea.

The next morning, a large group witnessed our departure. Many of the employees advised us not to leave. This advice vexed our poor Jack Johnson still more. He was nearly distracted from trying to get us on our way so that he would be relieved of his responsibility.

Casquette's sense of humor got the best of him. "I refuse to leave," he declared, winking at us, "until the boat is tried out by the sheriff and the carpenter."

"Are you going to go? Yes or no?" demanded the aggravated sheriff, at the end of his patience.

We began to feel a little sorry for him. The carpenter had done an excellent job and, after all, Port-of-Spain was only sixty miles away—a mere trifle compared to our voyage from St. Laurent. So we climbed into the boat.

The sheriff's face lighted with pleasure. Not stopping to roll up his trousers in his hurry, he pushed the canoe out into the deep water.

The six French fugitives were off again, with their 18 French rolls, 6 lbs. of rice, etc., the sheriff following along the beach in his automobile to prevent us from landing again in his territory.

Late in the afternoon we landed in Cedros. Jack Johnson the third met us at the Constabulary Station. He took down our names, called Port-of-Spain—"Six French fugitives"—then fed us and put us in a cell. The next morning he greeted us with the 18 French rolls, 6 lbs. of rice, 6 lbs. of sugar, etc., and sent us off again.

"If this keeps up," remarked Casquette, "we're going to arrive in Port-of-Spain with a canoe full of rice and sugar. Maybe we can start a store!"

The weather was clear but there was no wind, and Chiffot, who was at the tiller, decided to go a little farther out to try to catch a breeze. In the distance the high green mountains of Port-of-Spain were outlined against the blue sky.

About two or three miles out, Chiffot suddenly realized he no longer

was master of the canoe. We were drifting farther and farther from the coast. We had been caught in the current and were being taken to Venezuela.

Venezuela! If we landed there it would be the end of everything; we all realized the danger. The sail was lowered and I, being the weakest, took the tiller while the others each took a paddle and started to row.

For many hours, without rest, without speaking, they toiled with all their strength, the sweat pouring down their naked torsos. Even Panama seemed to have forgotten his wounds. To encourage them, I sang marching songs.

It took several hours of desperate rowing to regain the few miles against the current, which was very strong. But the danger was finally passed; a few more strokes of the paddles brought us to the beach.

"Casquette," I said, "this time we'll have to wreck the boat."

"Yes," he responded without hesitation. "We should have done it long ago. Everyone told us so, before we left Guiana. They were right."

We took all our belongings out of the canoe and Chiffot picked up an enormous rock, raised it over his head, and let it fall with a resounding crash. The canoe was crushed at the first blow.

We dressed in our best and threw our old clothes into the ocean. Hoping to avoid the suspicion which would be aroused by six men, we separated into two groups and arranged to meet at the Salvation Army depot in Port-of-Spain. Dadar came with me, and the others, who had become close friends, left with Casquette.

They decided to follow the beach; but Dadar and I, loaded with my two gasoline cans full of papers and butterflies, forced our way into the interior, hoping to find a shorter route.

Before long, we reached a tumble-down hut. A decrepit old Negro was squatting on the ground in front of the door, the flies buzzing around his head. In broken English I explained that we wanted food and shelter for the night.

He told us we could stay in his house. For a dollar, he killed a chicken and cooked it with rice. He informed us that the road was near by and that a bus for San Fernando passed at six o'clock in the morning.

Early the next morning, the friendly Negro guided us to the road. We flagged the bus and got on. Pushing our way through the gaily-dressed natives, we found a seat in the back.

I looked around in amazement. In addition to boxes and bundles of all sizes and shapes, the blacks had crates of chickens and ducks; their quacking and clucking joined in the general

hubbub. The Negroes talked and sang, their white teeth gleaming as they laughed.

Dadar grabbed my arm. "Look over there!" he whispered tensely.

A few seats away was the policeman who had bought us the supplies in Cedros. He was scratching his head in a puzzled manner, as if trying to recognize us. Then his face cleared.

"Where are the others?" he asked me.

"I don't know."

"And where's your canoe?"

"Wrecked on the rocks," I replied, secure in the knowledge that at last it was ruined forever.

Without any regard for the other passengers, the officer ordered the driver to return to Cedros. Half an hour later we were back at the Constabulary Station.

The Negro sheriffs take their responsibilities very seriously; any slight infraction of the letter of the law, or any act which is not precisely covered by regulations, puts them at a loss.

When the sheriff saw us, he threw up his hands in despair.

"Where are the others?" he cried.

"Somewhere on the beach."

"And what have you done with your boat?"

"It's wrecked on the rocks."

In despair the officer put on his uniform and started back with us on the bus. He was in about the same state of mind as the other sheriff at Palo Secco.

We had not traveled far when the bus stopped and took on four passengers: They were Panama, Casquette, Bebert, and Chiffot, who had the same idea as Dadar and myself.

The sheriff smiled broadly. Here were the other four culprits delivered to him by the hand of Providence. In a good humor again, he offered us each a cigarette.

We were installed in a cell at the prison of San Fernando, and in the afternoon the sheriff took me in his car to see where the canoe lay wrecked. He had to carry out his duty and see that it was really useless. Needless to say, I showed him an entirely different stretch of beach: if I had shown him the true location, he would have been capable of repairing the canoe and sending us on our way.

"When we get to Port-of-Spain, we'll be searched," advised Bebert. "They'll take our tobacco, so we'd better fill our plans (suppositories)."

We took his advice, and in a few hours we were on our way to Port-of-Spain by train. Casquette and Panama had not traveled like this for ten years or more, and they were thrilled by the adventure. Even Bebert, trying to act blasé because he had been here a few years before, did not succeed in hiding his pleasure.

At the Royal Prison of Port-of-Spain, we were searched minutely and everything in our pockets was confiscated.

"Let's roll a cigarette," suggested Bebert, as soon as we were placed in a cell and the guards had departed.

We smoked a cigarette apiece and then lay down to sleep. A few minutes later a guard came in with some bread for us. On his way out he stopped and sniffed. Something was wrong, he decided, but he went on out and closed the door.

Two minutes later the door opened again and two guards came into the cell. They searched us and looked all around the cell.

"Where's the tobacco?"

"No tobacco," Bebert answered innocently.

The guards left. After we had finished eating, Bebert, an incorrigible smoker, proposed another cigarette. Fifteen minutes later, the guard came in again. Smelling the scent of the tobacco, he called the chief guard.

The chief guard, who had no doubt seen many fugitives from Guiana, tapped Casquette on the rear and said, "They have their tobacco here."

The guard opened his large brown eyes in surprise, understanding nothing. They went out and did not disturb us again.

TEN minutes later we lay sleeping like dead men. The fatigue that we had resisted while we were active began to catch up with us. We slept throughout the night and nearly all the next day. Even though we were taken to the Anthropometric Bureau to be measured and recorded, it was all a vague dream to us. We slept standing up, and as soon as they finished measuring one of us he would slump onto the floor in a comatose sleep.

Late in the afternoon we were awakened by the entrance of a young man in civilian clothes.

"Hello, My Friend!" cried Bebert, rushing over to shake his hand. "This is the man who takes care of the fugitives," he explained. "We call him My Friend because he cannot say a sentence without saying 'My Friend.'"

"Come on. Get up, my friends," said the newcomer.

"Let's have something to eat first," said Chiffot, who was beginning to get hungry, as we had had nothing to eat since the night before.

"Come on. You have to get up, my friends," the young man repeated.

"Aren't they going to give us something to eat?" asked Casquette.

"Don't you want to get out, my friends?"

"Get out? Where?" I asked.

"Into town, of course. You're free, my friends."

"Free?" we chorused.

"Certainly. You're going to eat dinner at the Salvation Army, my friends."

I shook Dadar. "We're going out, Dadar. Get up."

The guard returned our possessions and we were soon dressed and on our way.

My companions were not what one would call respectable, but neither Bebert nor Casquette, who were the worst of the lot, could be called dangerous to society. They were hard, it is true, the result of being brought up in a vicious environment, and their years in Guiana had not made them any better. But the reception we received at the hands of Captain and Mrs. Heap, in charge of the Salvation Army in Port-of-Spain, brought tears to their eyes.

In the dining-room, a large table had been set in our honor. It was covered with a white cloth and in the center was a huge bouquet of flowers surrounded by plates heaped with fruits and cakes.

Captain Heap shook hands with us and asked us to sit down. As he said grace, our bowed heads hid eyes that wet with tears of gratitude. Mrs. Heap herself served us with all kinds of good things to eat.

Dadar could not remember having eaten from a tablecloth, and Casquette, who had been in Guiana for fifteen years, could only vaguely recall a similar occasion. Even Bebert, who ridiculed the show of emotion as weakness, was no less moved than the others.

When dinner was over, Captain Heap told us that the depot was full and that he would have to lodge us at a small hotel which was run by the Salvation Army. He took us across town and arranged for us to have a room. Six beds were brought in, and he advised us about the house rules before he left. We had to be in our room by ten o'clock, but, if we wanted to see a movie, we could arrange with the night watchman to keep the door open for us until eleven.

An hour later, the six of us were on our way to see our first talking picture. We were like a group of small boys who had just been let out of school; our excited faces were wreathed in smiles as we joked and laughed in anticipation of the coming treat.

Chapter Seven

A FEW DAYS after our arrival in Port-of-Spain, Mr. Bowen, the best attorney in the town, came to visit us at the Salvation Army. He recognized Bebert and inquired about his companions of a few years before. On being told that they had been rear-

rested in Colombia, he asked about other convicts from Guiana whom he had aided. Unfortunately, they had met the same fate, either in Colombia or Venezuela.

We told him our plans. Chiffot, who had a large sum of money, was taking a boat to Europe. Panama and I expected money from friends. Casquette intended to buy a small sailboat and go on from there.

"And what about you?" asked Mr. Bowen, turning to Bebert.

"I don't expect anything from anybody," he replied. "I haven't any friends or money."

"Well," said Mr. Bowen kindly, "I'll do what I can to help you. If your companions manage to leave by themselves, I'll pay for your passage to Haiti or another island."

That same evening, Panama wrote to his friends in Colombia and I wrote a long letter to the chief editor of the *Paris Police Magazine*, to whom I had sold many articles the year before, and offered him a manuscript of a hundred thousand words. I asked him to reply by cable in care of the Trinidad Bank. As this was the 27th of May, I expected a reply by the 5th or 6th of June.

The reporters came to interview us, and, after showing them clippings and articles I had written for *Police Magazine*, they treated me as a conferee and promised to help us in any way possible.

As a result of the article they printed in the *Trinidad Guardian*, many residents became interested in us, visiting us at the Salvation Army, buying my butterflies and souvenirs, and inviting us to lunch or tea in their homes. Everyone was most kind and generous to us.

Before 1931 it was very unlucky for fugitives from Devil's Island to land in Trinidad, because the British authorities deported them immediately, while Venezuela, twenty miles away, offered them sanctuary. The only consolation was that the British Government returned them on condition that they would not be punished for their attempt to escape.

But, at the end of 1931, an Italian fugitive from Guiana named Blengino, a hotelkeeper who had been condemned to life imprisonment for the murder of his wife and daughter in Monte Carlo, reached Trinidad with seven others and was arrested in Port-of-Spain. Blengino had some money, and, as he was not a French subject, decided to fight against extradition.

For a long time there had been an increase in sympathy for the unhappy fugitives who managed to reach the island and then were deported, manacles on their wrists, to Guiana. The two best attorneys of Trinidad, Mr. Bowen and Mr. Mason, the son of the

mayor, had long decided to plead the case of these miserable men, so they took advantage of the opportunity presented by Blengino's case, and Mr. Mason departed for England.

The British had never been able to understand how France could retain a hell like Devil's Island, a million times worse than their own Botany Bay, which had been abolished long before. A law was voted, stating that no fugitive landing in Trinidad would be deported; neither would he be permitted to reside there, but he would be given supplies for continuing his journey.

Blengino was the first to profit from the new law. He embarked for Italy and, as his guilt had never been proved, the Italian Government considered him innocent. He bought a new hotel on the Côte d'Azur, a few miles from the French border, and continued his interrupted life.

BUT many convicts took advantage of the law, refusing to go, and staying for several months at the expense of the British Government. Some even stayed a year or more.

This was not our intention. All of us wanted to gain some permanent place of refuge, and Chiffot was determined to visit his invalid mother in France. Unfortunately, though he had money for his passage, he had no passport.

However, like many other problems in this part of the world, this one was easily solved if enough money was forthcoming. In Trinidad were many political refugees from Venezuela, enemies of President Vicente Gomez. We went to the Spanish quarter, and a hairdresser gave us the address of an ex-general who might be able to help.

Three days later Chiffot showed us his Venezuelan passport, complete with photograph and all necessary visas. Under the name "Chiffara," as his passport read, he took passage for Hamburg on the Hamburg-America Line, intending to leave the boat secretly at Antwerp and from there enter France.

"One of us is free!" sighed Dadar, as we watched the ship pull away from the shore.

I was not so sure, but I kept my thoughts to myself.

Each morning I went to the bank for mail. The letter should have reached Paris May 29th. It was a cry of distress: "My life, my liberty are at stake. Cable 2500 francs (\$100) at once. That is the price of my life."

Nothing happened. The reply did not come. Of all the disappointments in my life, this was one of the most disheartening.

"If nothing comes by tomorrow," I told my companions one day, "we'll go on by canoe."

They all approved except Panama. He also was waiting for money and was not very enthusiastic about beginning another sea voyage such as we had just completed.

I went to the bank the next day as usual. My heart was high with hope as I entered the door and walked up to the clerk. The blond young man shook his head sympathetically before I could ask my oft-repeated question. Discouraged, I walked slowly back to the Salvation Army, to call My Friend and tell him that we were going on by canoe.

That afternoon My Friend took us to the office of the Inspector General of Police, the most important personage in the island after the Governor and the King's Attorney General. Tall and distinguished, his hair graying at the temples, the kindly official was seated behind a huge desk. In perfect French he invited us to be seated.

"We have no wish to place any hardship on you," he began, "and I believe you can have no cause to complain of your treatment here, but you understand that it is impossible to grant you permission to reside in Trinidad. I have been told that you wish to continue your journey. Do you have a boat?"

"No, sir, we do not."

"In that case, you may go down to the harbor and try to find one that will serve your purpose. When you have done so, report to me." Turning to My Friend, he continued: "Perhaps you will be kind enough to assist these men in their search?"

"With pleasure," answered that obliging gentleman.

"Where do you plan to go?" the Inspector asked us.

"To Miami," I replied.

"That's a long trip in a small sailboat," he remarked. "Are you all librérés?"

"Yes, sir, all of us."

"I can't understand a law that obliges men to spend the rest of their lives in that hell-hole after they have finished their terms." He paused a moment, shaking his head slowly.

THE interview was over, and we returned to the Salvation Army. We were finishing dinner that evening when My Friend burst into the dining-room.

"I've found a boat for you!" he cried, forgetting to add the inevitable "My Friend" in his enthusiasm.

"You certainly did that in a hurry," remarked Casquette ironically. "In France it would have taken a couple of months."

Down at the docks, we saw our future sailboat. It was an old lifeboat and on the stern was painted the name of the ship to which she had once belonged: S. S. *Newton*. Twice

the size of our wrecked canoe, she was sturdy and strong.

"We could go to France in that!" exclaimed Casquette.

"And we'll be able to lie down in it to sleep," added Dadar excitedly.

"And there's not much danger of getting doused with water all night," said Panama, whose wounds were just healed.

"Well, if it suits you, my friends, make a list of supplies that you'll need. A Navy carpenter will be put at your service and he'll make all the changes you think necessary."

I left my companions to occupy themselves with the boat and supplies, while I took over the responsibility of planning the route we would follow.

On a table in the Salvation Army dining-room, I spread out a large map of the Gulf of Mexico—a map which had been graciously donated to us by the Marshall Company, of Port-of-Spain. With calipers I measured the distance between the islands of the Lesser Antilles. It was 2,000 miles to Miami, but at no time would we be far from land, and we would be able to go ashore on the British islands for rest and supplies, with no thought of danger.

From Trinidad we would go to Grenada, 160 miles to the north, bypassing Tobago. From Grenada to St. Lucia, 175 miles farther north. Then we would by-pass the French Islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe and land at St. Kitts, which is English. From St. Kitts to St. Thomas, and from there to Puerto Rico. There we would have nothing to fear; on the contrary we would leave with a boatful of food and plenty of cigarettes.

From Puerto Rico we would go to Haiti, where we could land along the coast, at night if necessary, then to Cuba. Following the coast of Cuba, we would reach Key West and Miami.

In two days the boat was ready. Casquette had had the bow decked over and planking put along the sides. The Salvation Army had furnished food in great quantity, a small stove and some cooking utensils. The Port Service had given us a magnificent compass and much information.

The evening before we left, we visited all our friends to bid them good-bye, and I went to the Police Inspector to ask for a paper proving that the boat was ours.

"Impossible," he replied. "We have done it in the past and many fugitives have gone ashore in Venezuela and Colombia. The first thing they do is present the paper we have given them; then the Government complains that we have aided fugitives to escape. No, I'm sorry. The boat belongs to you, but I can't give you a certificate of ownership."

"Thank you, anyway," I replied. "We are very grateful for all you have done for us here. The British Government has treated us with the utmost courtesy, and we will never forget it."

Chapter Eight

ON THE MORNING of June 10th, we left Port-of-Spain. The press had announced our departure, but a torrential rain prevented most of the townspeople from coming down to see us off.

A Navy boat towed us through the Dragon's Mouth, which was extremely dangerous for small boats. On the way, an officer gave us some advice: "Go due east to Tobago. Go east as far as possible, because there is a strong current that will pull you to Venezuela or Colombia. And, if possible, I advise you to keep on to the east until you reach Barbados."

Across the Dragon's Mouth, the patrol boat stopped and we got into the lifeboat and hoisted the sail. Casquette took the tiller, and the sailors at the stern of the Navy craft waved good-bye as they turned back to Port-of-Spain.

Gradually we crept out of sight of Trinidad, and toward evening Tobago appeared in the distance. We had been having some trouble with the sail, so we decided to land there.

Tobago Island, in the Caribbean, and Juan Fernandez Island, off the coast of Chile in the South Pacific, are both marked on the tourist maps as "Robinson Crusoe's Island."

When Alexander Selkirk returned to England in 1711, the recital of his solitary life on Juan Fernandez found a considerable audience. Among his listeners was Daniel Defoe, to whom Selkirk's adventures suggested the fictitious story of *Robinson Crusoe*. In 1719 Defoe's book was published, but in it he embellishes the original facts to such an extent that they are scarcely recognizable. Likewise, with great care and in unmistakable terms, he places *Crusoe* not on the Pacific Island of Juan Fernandez but on the Island of Tobago in the British West Indies.

Consequently, though Juan Fernandez was the real island on which Selkirk spent five memorable years alone, Tobago is the island on which the immortal *Robinson Crusoe* sojourned, and both have some claim to the title "Robinson Crusoe's Island."

Not far from the beach where we landed was a natural cave in the cliffs. We spent the night there.

The next day, we cleared the waves of Tobago, and I gave Casquette his sailing plan.

"Now due north," I said.

The sea was calm and the breeze was in our favor. A tarpaulin was stretched over the cockpit to protect us from the heat, and, lolling back comfortably in our seats, we found the trip very pleasant.

Grenada was about eighty miles north and twenty miles west of Tobago, and we hoped to sight it by morning. The day and night passed without incident and we continued due north, going along at the rate of six or seven miles an hour. By evening of the second day we had seen no land.

"We must have passed Grenada," said Casquette.

"What does it matter?" I answered carelessly. "There's nothing of interest in Grenada. We have plenty of food and tobacco. We can keep on to St. Lucia."

Two nights and another day passed. The weather was fine, but, when dawn of the fourth day broke on an empty ocean, I began to wonder where we were. I looked at the map and figured that we should be about opposite the southern end of Martinique.

"Where are we?" asked Panama. "I don't know exactly," I replied. "We'll change our course and go west. Tonight we'll surely see one of the islands of the Antilles chain, and we'll try to find out which one it is."

No one slept that night. Everyone was on the lookout for a glimpse of land. But morning came and the sea was as barren as the day before. Where were we?

We spread the map out on the bottom of the canoe.

"We've been going along here," I said, tracing our course on the map with my finger. "We went due north for three days at the rate of five or six miles an hour."

"At night we must have made at least ten miles an hour," said Bebert. "The wind is much stronger then."

"Let's say an average of six miles. Seventy hours at six miles an hour is more than four hundred miles," I calculated. "Yesterday morning we should have been opposite Martinique, about thirty or forty miles to the east. Since then, we've gone due west for about a hundred miles. We should have sighted land long before this. If we're going in the right direction, we should be well north of the French possessions."

"Well," said Panama, "what are we going to do?"

"We could go northwest to the Leeward Islands," I offered. "There are about fifty of them, and we're bound to hit one. What do you think?"

"You've been setting the course. It's up to you."

"We might have passed between two of the islands without noticing," said Bebert. "If we go northwest we're apt to pass between Haiti and Puerto Rico. There's sixty miles between them. Then where would we go? To the North Pole?"

"Let's keep on due west. We will at least hit one of the Central American Republics."

"Well, anyway, we can't pass through the Panama Canal without noticing it!" said Casquette irrepressibly.

We went west. I spent hours over the map, trying to figure out the answer. I could not understand how we could have passed between two islands without knowing it. I began to suspect that Bebert had changed direction during the night when he replaced Casquette at the tiller.

"If we could see a ship," said Dadar, "we could ask where we are."

But we had seen no ships, not even a fishing boat, since our departure.

THREE more days passed. We had covered more than 1500 miles without seeing any land at any time. We had changed direction so many times that I had not the slightest idea where we could be. That we were now in the Caribbean Sea was the only thing that was certain.

It was on the 16th day out of Trinidad that we finally sighted the smoke of a ship. It was going south and would cross our course about a mile away. Casquette steered straight for the boat, and we stood up and began to signal, waving our shirts and coats.

For a breathless few minutes we were afraid that she would not see us. But after what seemed like hours, we saw her change course and come in our direction. She turned out to be a tanker with the German flag flying from her stern. She stopped about half a mile away, and when they lowered the gangway Bebert and I went aboard. We were immediately surrounded by German sailors, jabbering questions excitedly. Finally, an officer pushed his way through the melee and addressed us in English.

"Who are you and where do you come from?"

"From Devil's Island," I answered frankly.

"De l'Île du Diable!" he exclaimed, in perfect French.

I explained who we were, that we were lost and wanted to find out our location.

The officer sent a steward to find the captain, who soon came over to us and asked us some more questions before replying:

"You are exactly eighty miles north of Curaçao, and one hundred miles

from the coast of South America. Where did you want to go?"

"To Miami," I answered, appalled that we were so near the Venezuelan coast and still so far from our destination.

"To Miami! In that boat?" exclaimed the captain. "You'll never be able to cross the Gulf Stream!"

"The Gulf Stream?" I repeated stupidly.

On the chart, the captain showed me the course of the Gulf Stream. Now I understood how we had lost our way.

WE signed the log for the captain, and he offered to take us to Venezuela. On our refusal, he had a sailor bring us a basket of food and a dozen bottles of beer, and wished us good luck. We autographed some pieces of paper for the sailors and they took our pictures; then we climbed back into our little sailboat, and started out again. The sailors waved their hats and shouted good-bye until we were out of sight of the ship.

"Well, where are we?" Casquette asked me, when we were finally under way.

"About a hundred miles off the Venezuelan coast," I told him. "Here's what happened—the same thing that's happened to all the fugitives. Remember what the Navy officer in Trinidad said? 'Keep to the east. Pass Barbados if you can. If not, you'll be carried to Venezuela or Colombia.'"

"After we left Tobago we were carried away by the Gulf Stream. We thought we were going due north, but the current was taking us west, and we were in reality going northwest."

"What are we going to do now?" asked Casquette.

"The best thing is to try to reach Panama. It's about 800 miles away, but if we keep close to the coastline of Venezuela and Colombia, we can stop and spend a night ashore if we get too tired."

We set a course for Panama, and late the next day we sighted Margarita Island, off the coast of Venezuela. We continued on toward it and landed there the following morning. After we beached the boat, Casquette and Bebert went to a little village to inquire where we could find fresh water.

An hour later I saw them coming back; with them was an elderly, distinguished-looking man. He was dressed in tropical whites and wore a wide-brimmed Panama hat. From his attire, I took him to be a Venezuelan plantation-owner, but as he approached us with Casquette and Bebert, I heard him talking to them in French.

"This is Dr. Bougras," Casquette said with a smile.

Dr. Bougras! The famous fugitive! Everybody had thought he had perished in his own escape from Devil's Island. Yet here he was—alive, obviously prosperous, and as we later learned, now a prominent and respected man.

Chapter Nine

I WAS NOT personally acquainted with Dr. Bougras, for I had been on St. Joseph Island when he arrived in the Penal Colony. But Dadar knew him quite well, having shared the same cage with him on the convict-ship that brought them to Guiana. Dadar had told me many stories about the doctor, and I also had read the newspaper articles dealing with his crime and his fantastic escape.

After a few words about our trip, Bougras hesitated a moment, and then invited us to accompany him to his house and have dinner with him that night. On the way, I noticed that his manner toward us was somewhat reserved, and I suspected that he was wondering whether our presence here might possibly jeopardize his own position.

Several patients were waiting for Bougras on the veranda of his house. He asked us to excuse him and remain on the veranda, while he took the patients inside to examine them.

As we waited, Dadar told me more of the details of the strange case of Dr. Bougras.

Hero of the First World War, six times wounded on the field of battle, decorated with the Croix de Guerre and Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, head doctor of a hospital in Marseille, Dr. Pierre Bougras had been sentenced to Devil's Island for life for the murder of a bank collector, Jacques Rumebe, a former war comrade. Robbery had been the motive of his crime, for although he had a lucrative practice he had lived far beyond his means and was desperately in need of money. It was only by a miracle that he escaped the guillotine.

The President of the Court of Assizes, after pronouncing the sentence, had added: "The crime of Dr. Bougras has shocked not only the population of Marseille but all of France. It is important, for an example, that the condemned man serve his sentence in its entirety."

Bougras arrived at the Guiana Penal Colony in March, 1931. On August 30th of the same year he escaped, with a number of other convicts. His life-sentence had lasted only five months!

The entire French press was scandalized. They demanded that Bou-

gras be apprehended at once. But it was too late, for by now Bougras was at sea in an Indian canoe, en route to Venezuela.

As had happened with us, Bougras and his companions almost lost their lives in the Nickery Mudbanks. They did not head for Trinidad, as we had done, because at that time the British Colonial Government was shipping all French fugitives back to Guiana. Instead they went up the Orinoco River to the village of Irapa, where they were arrested by the Venezuelan police. But, when Bougras treated the illness of the mayor, and saved that gentleman's life, he was set free, and came to make his home on Margarita, where he now lived with his wife in some comfort.

The next morning Bougras accompanied us to the beach and stood watching as we shoved off and set sail for Panama again.

I looked back at Bougras, wondering what the future held in store for him. He was free now, but a change of government in Venezuela easily could result in his re-arrest and deportation to Guiana. His freedom was not secure.

AFTER sailing along the coast of Venezuela for several days, we reached the mouth of a large lake. Rising from its muddy waters and towering high in the air were countless oil derricks which were pumping the petroleum from the sands below the lake. On an island was a village built on tall pilings, evidently a settlement where the oil-workers lived. In the shallow water along the shores, perched precariously atop smaller pilings, were native huts of bamboo and thatch.

"We can't land there," said Bebert. "That's Venezuelan territory."

"Where are we?" Casquette asked me as he saw me checking our position on my map.

"At Lake Maracaibo," I replied. "Exactly where Amerigo Vespucci landed in 1499."

"You're quite a historian," Casquette smiled.

"It's right here on the map," I answered.

We turned back out to sea and traveled through the night. By morning we realized we would have to land soon because our water was not good to drink. The shore stretched before us, a vast desert covered with cactus and barren of habitation.

"That's La Guajira," said Bebert. "We can land there without worrying about the police."

We headed in for shore, the canoe advancing slowly over the quiet sea. Standing in the bow, I caught sight of a line of white foam a hundred yards ahead.

"There must be a bar there!" I called out to Casquette.

"Cast anchor!" he yelled.

I tried to lift the heavy anchor, but it was too much for me. I called Dadar to help me. He ran up, but it was too late.

The little craft had reached the breaker line, and a huge comb lifted it high in the air. The sudden tilt knocked me off my feet and I slid down the almost perpendicular deck into the cockpit, dragging Dadar with me. The boat was carried along at breakneck speed and then thrown up on the steeply sloping beach.

We jumped out and tried to drag the boat farther out of the water, but it was too heavy and the beach was too steep, so we had to content ourselves with unloading our supplies hurriedly while the waves broke over the craft and filled it with water.

"We can't do anything about it now," I said. "Maybe after the tide goes down we can drain it."

We took off our clothes and spread them on the beach to dry.

I looked at the map. We had gone about forty miles during the night.

"We should be in the Bay of Honda," I told the others, "on the Guajira Peninsula. It says here that this is the Guajira Desert, a waste land overgrown by cactus and inhabited by the primitive Guajira Indians."

"Are we in Colombia?" asked Dadar.

"Yes," I replied.

"Then we're free, aren't we?" he said laconically.

"How far is it to Santa Marta?" asked Panama.

"About 140 miles, according to the map."

"Let's go there," he said. "I have some friends there, and I know they'll help us."

"We're not going to Santa Marta and get ourselves arrested. Colombia has no love for fugitives from Guiana. You know that. And he can tell you the same," I said, nodding my head toward Bebert. "Tomorrow morning," I continued, "we're going to drain the boat and take to the sea again—this time to Panama. We have enough food for four or five days and in that time—"

"Look! Indians!" exclaimed Dadar, pointing.

THEY were not very tall, the Guajira Indians, but their coppery faces were stern and unyielding; their naked torsos above their single piece of clothing, a loincloth, were wiry and muscular. Three of them had emerged from behind a clump of cactus, and stood silently watching us.

We jumped up in alarm. Now, from behind every bush, an Indian

stepped out, his bow at the ready position. We turned slowly around, searching for a way to escape, only to find that we were completely surrounded.

"Our little brown brothers don't seem exactly sympathetic," whispered Casquette.

One of them, who seemed to be the chief, came toward us. In a guttural language he began to question us, menace showing in every line of his face. With our small stock of languages, we tried to answer him, but at each successive attempt his manner became more ugly. He shook his head impatiently and growled his words more emphatically. Finally, disgusted with our ignorance, he motioned for the others to come forward and gave them some order in his unknown tongue.

The Indians started to pick up the clothes we had laid out on the sand to dry.

"We can't let them take our clothes!" shouted Bebert. He rushed over to one of the Indians and grabbed at his clothes. With a yell of rage, another Indian dashed up and thrust his arrow against Bebert's chest. Bebert, fuming with anger, let go the clothes.

It would have been dangerous to resist. Frustrated, we watched the savages seize everything we had, clothes, compass, food and utensils. Then one of them picked up the gasoline can in which I had put my manuscript.

Heedless of danger, I snatched the can out of his hand and dumped the contents on the sand. The Indian, taken by surprise, glared at me. Then, shrugging his shoulders as if to imply that the ridiculous actions of white men were beyond his comprehension, he picked up the can and walked off, leaving the papers to flutter down the beach.

When they had collected everything in sight, they backed warily to the shelter of the cactus and in a moment had disappeared from view.

"They're not very polite," remarked Casquette, joking in spite of the tragedy of the situation.

"We're really in a bad way now," said Dadar. He was standing there in his shorts, the only one of us who possessed a garment of any sort. "All that's left is that tiny bag of rice and one pot. What are we going to do?"

Fortunately, there was a rubber bag full of water in the shade of a cactus. We had filled it from the barrel on the boat and I had put it there to keep cool. While the others were discussing our predicament, I took the bag and emptied the water into the cooking pot. Then I put my precious manuscripts in the bag.

Bebert grumbled and made several slighting remarks, for he had wanted the bag to cover himself. But I had taken it first, and, as I had saved their *libré* papers, the others upheld me.

The sun was going down and a brisk breeze was beginning to blow. Fortunately we found a few matches, overlooked by the Indians, so we stirred ourselves to gather dry wood and light a huge fire to keep us warm during the chill night.

For many years Venezuela and Colombia have disputed their respective claims to the Guajira Desert, the border at one time running more or less along the center line of the peninsula. In recent years Venezuela has found it so difficult to exercise any authority over the Indians who inhabit it, that she has ceded territory bit by bit, until Colombia now holds undisputed title to about nine-tenths of it.

Few white men ever have penetrated this strange country, which is so overgrown with cactus that the Guajira Indians are called the "Cactus Eaters." However, the Guajiras have not so terrible a reputation as that of their neighbors, the famous Motilone Indians, who live a hundred miles to the southwest. The Guajiras are essentially nomadic, devoting their energies to raising horses and cattle, and, unless they are drunk, they will usually investigate a stranger before attacking him.

Not so the Motilones, who kill on sight with their powerful bows and arrows. Not content with that, they carve up the victim and carry away parts of his body—for what purpose, no one knows—as they did in 1941 to several Americans working for an oil company.

When day came, we went to see the boat. It was full of sand and the rudder was shattered. Since we had nothing with which to repair it, our voyage by water was over and we would have to go on by land.

We cut several squares out of the sail with an old rusty machete that had been left in the canoe, wrapped the squares around us in linoleum fashion, and started out along the beach.

According to the map, the nearest village was sixty miles away. We hoped to reach it in four days. It was a tiring march along the beach, for although we walked as near the edge of the water as possible, our feet sank in the soft sand at every step.

Late in the afternoon we came to a bay, marked on the map as Portete Bay. It was about two miles across, too far to swim, so we camped there for the night, intending to go around it the next day.

We found nests of sea-turtle eggs by following the imprints of the turtles' flippers. A small hillock of sand indicated the presence of the eggs, nearly a hundred in each nest.

My companions gorged themselves on huge omelettes, using only the yolks and cooking them on hot stones, but my stomach refused to accept this nourishment.

The next morning we went around the bay and continued up the coast. The scenery began to change. Now we walked along the edge of an immense desert of sand with high mountains looming in the distance.

Toward the end of the day, we caught sight of two long barrack-like buildings.

"A village!" cried Dadar.

But as we came closer we saw that the buildings were closed and no one was in sight. We entered one of the houses. It was bare of furniture, and the only signs of the former occupants were a few strings of drying corn hanging from the rafters.

"I found some clothes!" shouted Dadar from the other house.

We all ran over to see what he had discovered. In an old box were a number of women's dresses, brightly colored and voluminous. We divided them and proceeded to array ourselves in our new-found finery.

"We're a sight in these things!" said Bebert, draping a gaudy red-and-white-checked dress about his huge frame. "But they'll keep us from being eaten alive by the mosquitoes."

We all burst out laughing as Casquette, in a bright green-and-yellow-striped Mother Hubbard, bursting at the seams, did an impromptu dance, prancing about with elephantine grace.

With our unshaven faces protruding above the gay colors of our be-ruffled dresses, we all looked like bearded ladies who had escaped from a circus. Having no mirror to see ourselves, we guessed what we looked like by the grotesque appearance of the others.

After making a fire and cooking some of the corn with the last of our rice and turtle eggs, we lay down on the floor and went to sleep.

Two days later we passed around Santa Rosa in the night without being seen by anyone. We were anxious to avoid contact with the authorities, and now that we had found a few coconut trees along the beach it no longer was necessary to see anyone to obtain food.

Bebert, Casquette and Panama walked together, making a separate group. Since Panama knew this country better than I and spoke Spanish perfectly, they had no more use for me. Panama expected aid from

friends in Colombia, and Bebert, who had been in the Barranquilla prison during his previous escape, knew some French people there, so Casquette aligned himself with them, believing them in a position to offer better chances of success.

Dadar, however, stayed with me, helping me to carry my heavy bundle of manuscript and other papers. He could not understand why I bothered with it, and often, when he grew tired, threatened to let me carry the whole load.

AFTER we passed Santa Rosa the country became more settled, although very sparsely. The houses were ten or twelve miles apart, the distance we traveled in a day. At night we stopped near the habitations, sleeping around a fire built in the section reserved for the pigs, cows and dogs. The people always gave us food, usually boiled bananas and fried tortoise.

For ten days we walked along that beach, and were about twenty-five miles from Santa Marta when we arrived at an extensive hacienda.

A dozen peons ran out and burst into laughter as they saw our grotesque garb. Panama told them we had been shipwrecked and had found the women's clothes in an abandoned house. The manager of the plantation allowed us to sleep in the toolshed, and had the peons bring us boiled bananas and rice.

In the middle of the night I was aroused by the sound of voices. Several men were standing near by, holding their horses by the reins, and one of them was talking to Panama. The first distinguishable word I heard was: "Nacionalidad?"

I got up and the man, chief of the local police, turned to me.

"Nationality?"

"French."

"Where did you come from and where are you going?" he asked officiously.

"We were on our way to Panama when our boat went to pieces on a reef."

"Where did you get these clothes—steal them?" There was no humor in his face as he asked the question.

"The Indians stole ours and we found these in an abandoned house," I replied.

"Do any of you have identification papers?"

I pulled our *libéré* booklets out of my bundle. I guessed correctly that he could not read French, and he believed that these were our military booklets, which all Frenchmen receive after their required period of Army service.

"Where are your passports?" was his next rapid-fire question.

"We lost them in the shipwreck." "All right," he said, "you'll come along with us to Santa Marta, and we'll investigate your case more fully." "We're caught! The escape is over!" whispered Dadar.

I silenced him with a look. "Don't get upset so easily," I told him in the same low tone. "We still have a chance—a very good chance."

Our arrival in Santa Marta caused a near-riot. A crowd of loafers and children followed us all the way to the police station, screaming with laughter, pointing their fingers and jeering at the five bearded men in long trailing dresses. Even the dogs barked with excitement, adding to the general uproar.

The Commandant took one look at us and summed up the situation.

"H-m-m-m—*Profugos de la Guiana. Fugitives from Guiana.*"

I was going to deny it when Dadar nudged me and whispered, "Look! There on the wall—a picture of Bebert!"

The wall was covered with photographs of wanted criminals, among them about forty pictures of French fugitives who had been picked up in Colombia in the last few years. Right in the center was a clearly recognizable photo of Bebert.

It was useless to deny it.

We were each given pants and a shirt, then put in a cell to await our transportation to Barranquilla, the concentration center for French fugitives who were to be deported to Guiana.

Chapter Ten

WE WERE TAKEN to the office of Colonel Chegwin, the Chief of Police. He was about 50 years old, slightly paunchy, with a pleasant and friendly manner. He asked us to sit down, and then, noticing that Panama was trembling, he inquired, "What's the trouble?"

"Fever," chattered the wretched Panama.

"Here," said the official kindly, giving Panama a fifty-centavo piece, "buy yourself some quinine."

The gesture was typical of this kind-hearted man.

We sat down in the armchairs, and the newspapermen who were there asked permission to question us. I spoke for all of us, as Panama was too ill to answer and the others spoke no Spanish. I showed the reporters my manuscript and told them that I, too, was a journalist. Then I offered the letters from the *Paris Police Magazine* as proof that I spoke the truth.

Bringing out our *libéré* booklets, I told them, "We are not fugitives. We finished our terms."

"Why have they arrested us?" I asked. "We've served our time, and we had no intention of landing in Colombia. We were on our way to Panama when we were shipwrecked. Is it a crime to be shipwrecked?"

The newspapermen discussed it among themselves. My manuscript, comprising 6,000 pages written by hand, had impressed them, and I had also shown them official documents whose authenticity could not be questioned.

"I can't put these men in prison," declared the Commandant. Picking up the telephone, he called the French Consul and asked him to come over immediately.

THE French Consul arrived a few minutes later. After examining our papers, he said he would have to wire the French Ambassador in Bogotá for instructions.

"While we're waiting for an answer," he suggested to the Commandant, "perhaps we might put these men in the National Prison."

The Commandant telephoned the prison and gave special orders for our treatment.

Meanwhile, one of the reporters called me aside and asked me to write some articles for his paper, *La Prensa*. He gave me a few pesos for cigarettes, and said he was sure we would be freed within a week.

Don Gregorio, the stout and jolly warden of the Carcel Nacional, received us with great friendliness. "I'm going to put you in a cell by yourselves. The rest of the prisoners are bad men and you wouldn't want to associate with them."

We smiled at his assumption of our innocence. Then with another broad smile he shook hands with us, bade us "*buenas noches*," and bustled off down the corridor.

This turn of events filled us with hope.

The day after our arrival, the Barranquilla papers printed long articles on our arrest, in which I was referred to as "*el periodista Frances*," the French journalist. The other prisoners, the guards and Don Gregorio all nicknamed me "*El Periodista*."

Mr. Paéz Reyna, of *La Prensa*, bought me writing materials and requested me to write some articles on the life of the prisoners on Devil's Island. The following week four of my articles appeared on the front page of his journal, which brought me many new and lasting friends. Society women visited the jail, bringing me delicacies and some furniture for my barren cell.

The warden trusted me and often invited me into his office for lunch or a talk, but he did not like my companions because of their crude man-

ner and sullen attitude. Their tattooing seemed utterly barbaric to him, and further alienated his interest.

One morning Colonel Chegwin telephoned that he had received good news. A telegram had arrived from the French Ambassador in Bogotá. He read it to me over the phone: "Send the fugitives as free men to Martinique by the next ship."

"Do you think that's good news?" I exploded. "That's nothing but extraterritorial disguise! They'll let us board the boat as free men, only to arrest us in Martinique and send us back to Guiana!"

I called Mr. Reyna and told him the new development.

"Write an article about it," he replied, "and we'll print it in tomorrow's paper."

He was as good as his word, and the morning *Prensa* carried my article: "Will the Colombian authorities compound the crime of sending free men back to Guiana's Hell?"

The article aroused immediate interest, and Colonel Chegwin promised not to deliver us to the French authorities under those conditions. But every time a French boat touched at Barranquilla, we lived in constant fear until it had departed.

However, we were hopeful. Every one assured us that they were only awaiting a reply from Guiana confirming our *libéré* status before setting us free.

Several weeks later I heard from the Colonel's secretary.

"You'll be free in a few days," he reported. "We just received an answer from Guiana confirming that you are all *libérés*. The Colonel is forwarding it to Bogotá by airmail and asking a reply by cable. You'll probably be out in four or five days at the most."

I told Dadar the welcome news and arranged for the others, to whom I hadn't spoken since our arrival, to be informed.

But a week passed, then another, then a third.

No news came from Bogotá. I guessed that the French Ambassador had opposed our liberation and that Colombia had complied with his request.

Despair followed hope, only to have a false rumor raise our hopes again, which was in turn followed by despair. It was an agonizing period of waiting.

"Why don't you ask for permission to go into town?" It was one of the Colombian prisoners who propounded the question.

"Go into town?" I replied. "You're crazy."

"No, I'm not. I'm sure Colonel Chegwin will let you go."

I was certain he was mistaken, but after he had repeated his arguments on several occasions, I decided it would cost nothing to try. I wrote a letter to Colonel Chegwin, explaining that I wanted to visit the good people who had shown their kindness and their interest in my case.

To my surprise, Don Gregorio called me into his office the next day and told me to get ready. Two detectives were waiting to take me into town. I was allowed to go where I wished but was required to return to the prison by six in the evening.

The following week I asked to go out again. This time only one detective accompanied me.

Soon I was in the habit of going out several times a week, always with the same officer. He treated me, and if I had wanted to escape it would have been quite easy, but everyone was so sure we would be released that I refused to do anything that would lessen the chances of my companions or myself.

One Tuesday I presented myself in the warden's office, ready to go out. The authorization was there but the detective had not arrived. When he had not come by one o'clock, I telephoned the Colonel, who told me that he had no one to send. I took my courage in both hands and asked to go out alone.

He thought a few seconds, then asked to speak to the warden. When they had finished, Don Gregorio said: "The Colonel has no detective to send with you, but he's letting you go out alone."

That afternoon I was on my own in Barranquilla. First of all, I went to the Colonel's office to thank him for trusting me.

"The day I escape," I told him, "I'll ask for a man to accompany me. When you trust me to go out alone, I can't betray your confidence."

"I'm sure you will be out soon," he replied. "That's the reason I let you go into town."

But the weeks dragged into months, and nothing happened. Though I often had moments of discouragement, I was generally hopeful.

But Dadar was bored and wanted to go into town. I had asked the Colonel to let him come with me, but this he refused. "We have confidence in you, René, but not in the others," was the explanation.

Four months passed.

One afternoon Mr. Paez Reyna told me, in a friendly manner, that his paper could no longer take up my defense, because the French Society of Barranquilla had threatened to take away all their advertising if his policy was not changed. This would have meant a great loss of money, and I understood his position perfectly.

December arrived; then Christmas.

I was often tempted not to return to the prison. It would have been so easy. I always went out alone now, and I would have had a full day before anyone missed me. A number of the prisoners ridiculed what they considered my foolish loyalty, and even some of the guards had suggested that I escape.

But I still hoped to be freed soon and I did not like to risk the liberty of my companions, especially Dadar.

NEW YEAR'S DAY, I was sitting in the yard, wishing I were out to celebrate the holiday, when Don Gregorio called me into his office to tell me that Colonel Chegwin wanted me to come into town to see him.

As I walked into the Colonel's office I sensed that something had happened. He greeted me with his usual friendliness, and I sat down, waiting for him to explain.

"I have bad news for you, Don René," he began. "The French police arrive from Paris tomorrow to take you back to Guiana."

"The French police—from Paris? You must be mistaken. They must be guards from Cayenne, not the Paris police!"

"No, it's the Paris police," he repeated. "They arrive tomorrow on the *Perou*, and will take you with them when the boat comes back from Colón."

"Then you're going to let us be sent back to Guiana?"

"No, no," he contradicted. "Not you. Your companions will go; I can do nothing for them. They're real criminals, but you were convicted for only a minor offense." He smiled. "You know that I wouldn't send you back to Devil's Island."

"But how can you prevent it?" I asked, puzzled.

"Here's what you must do," he instructed. "Go see all your friends today and ask them for some money. You'll need it. Then go back to the prison as usual. Above all, don't be tempted to escape today, because I'll be in enough trouble without being criticized for allowing you such unwarranted liberty, especially when I've just been notified of the arrival of the French police."

"Tomorrow, arrange to be put in a cell by yourself. Start an argument with another prisoner or something. I'll tell Don Gregorio. He'll have the door opened so you can leave without any risk."

"But my friend Dadar," I objected. "He's no criminal. He was convicted when he was only 17, for a kid trick. Can't you do anything for him? Can't I take him with me?"

The Colonel shook his head. "No, it's impossible. Everyone is interested

in you and trusts you—but you only. And a companion would only increase your difficulties. You'll have to go alone."

I did not know how to thank the good Colonel for all he had done. I determined to justify his faith in me by becoming a credit to society, to prove by my subsequent actions that kindness and faith will do more to make a good man than all the prisons in the world.

"Good-by now and good luck," he said, handing me a ten-peso note. We shook hands and wished each other a Happy New Year.

I was shy about visiting the people who had been interested in me, and asking them for money on this holiday; so I went only to see Mr. Gaston Mollen, manager of the Filta Silk Mills and one of the most influential members of the French Colony. He gave me fifty pesos and promised to do everything in his power to help my friend Dadar.

I bought some candy and some extra food for Dadar's holiday dinner, and went back to the prison. Sitting on my bed, I looked at Dadar, lying on his pallet of straw. This was my last night here and I was pained to think of Dadar returning to that hell of Guiana, while I continued free.

The next day, around noon, one of the Colombian prisoners ran up excitedly, waving a newspaper. "The French police are coming to get you

tomorrow! Read it," he said, shoving the paper into my hand.

Dadar hurried over and I read the item to him. For a few seconds he said nothing, crushed with despair. Then, pulling me aside, he said, "I'm going to escape tonight. Are you going with me?"

I scarcely knew how to answer him. I had hoped that he would know nothing about it until it was all over. He was young and knew nothing of the difficulties facing him in an attempt to escape in an unknown country. Headstrong and rash, he was apt to be killed or rearrested, for he knew nothing of the country or the language. If he were sent back to Guiana he would serve only a short term. I could send him money to enable him to make another escape to Trinidad and go on from there by boat.

"Dadar," I said, "come inside. I have something to tell you." He took my arm and we walked across the yard and into the coolness of the dim prison.

"Dadar," I began, "you must see that you haven't a chance to succeed. You'll be shot by the sentries. And even if you manage to get over the wall safely, how will you get along? How will you eat? You don't speak Spanish and you'll be recognized and arrested. You haven't a chance!"

"What if I do die?" he said defiantly. "Anything's better than going back there! I wish I'd had your

chances to get out. Oh, if they'd let me go out *once*, even with a detective, you'd see if I'd ever come back!"

"Don't talk like that, Dadar. It doesn't do any good. If you listen to me a minute, I'll tell you how we can both be free."

The word "free" arrested his attention and he stopped raving.

"How?" he asked tensely.

"You haven't a chance to escape over the wall. If you did, I'd go with you. As it is, I have a chance to escape tonight with the aid of the guards, but I can't take you with me. When I—"

"Why can't I go?" interrupted Dadar. Then his passion seemed to take hold of him again. "All you do is think of yourself. You never care what happens to the rest of us. I'm going to escape tonight, even if I get killed in the attempt!"

"Dadar—listen to me!" I protested.

"You're nothing but a self-centered pig! I'm sure it's you that's kept me from going into town and having a chance to escape. But you can't stop me now. I'm going to escape tonight, no matter what you say!"

"All right," I said. "Do as you like. Go ahead and escape. But from now on it's every man for himself!"

And I turned on my heel and went into the cell, leaving him standing in the corridor.

For over an hour I watched him making a tour of the wall, looking for the best place to scale it. The fool



I scarcely knew how to answer him. He was young, and knew nothing of the difficulties facing him in an attempt to escape in an unknown land.

youngster was bound to get himself into trouble.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, an hour before I was to put into execution the plan I had made with Don Gregorio, to be placed in a separate cell, Dadar came into the room. Very much abashed, he sat down beside me.

"René, I've been thinking," he said. "You've always been kind to me, helping me in Saint Laurent when I didn't know what to do, and sharing everything with me. You've never advised me wrongly and you probably won't now. Tell me the rest of your plan."

"All right, Dadar," I replied. "You know that I've had a hundred chances to escape and that I've always come back—because of you, because I hoped we'd all get out eventually. The Colonel told me yesterday that the police were coming and he offered me a chance to go free alone. It would be pretty foolish for me to refuse and all of us go back, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Dadar dubiously.

"Well, if I reach Panama, I can make some money and send you enough to escape to Trinidad in style and you can go on from there by boat, like Chiffot. You know me too well to think I'd leave you in Guiana if I could help you."

"Yes, you've always been like a brother to me," affirmed Dadar, visibly brightening.

"You'll only get a year in prison for escaping, and the six months we've spent here will count as part of the time; so you should be out in six months. If I went back, I'd get from three to five years in solitary on the Islands, and I'd never live through it. Then where would we be?"

"I guess you are right, René. I won't try anything. But promise me you'll send the money."

"Of course, Dadar! Six months isn't very long, and I'll send you the money as soon as I can."

These words gave him courage. I slipped him a ten-peso note and told him to sell all the things I had in the prison and keep the money. Then I told him the details of my plan.

At three o'clock it was time to go out in the yard. I shook hands with Dadar and told him good-bye. "You can count on me," I added. "I'll write you in care of Charlot B., at Saint Laurent du Maroni, as soon as I reach Panama."

I walked out into the sunlight.

A few days before a young prisoner had stolen some cigarettes from me, and I planned to pick a quarrel with him. Taking him by the arm, I demanded, "Give me my cigarettes!"

The man tried to pull away, but I tackled him and we rolled to the ground. I had rarely fought in my life, but today my strength was

doubled and I fought with a happy heart. The rest of the prisoners made a circle around us.

Before long, the guards came and separated us. Don Gregorio ordered me into a solitary cell for twenty-four hours.

Night came, and the hours of darkness passed slowly. I heard the sentries reporting as they made their rounds.

My mind whirled with conjectures. Had this whole plan been a conspiracy between the Colonel and the police to prevent the escape of a desperate fugitive?

A key turned in the lock. The door opened slightly. Then a voice whispered, "*Listo! (Ready?)*"

"*Si, señor,*" I answered jolly. "*Cuidado!*" said the voice. "Be careful."

I picked up my roll of manuscript and tiptoed into the dark corridor, following the guard. We reached the quarters of the guards. Five or six were there, lounging and smoking, and they smiled when they saw me. "*Buena suerte! Que le vaya bien!*" they said jolly. "Good luck!"

At the outer door my friend the detective was waiting. He took me as far as the cathedral plaza, where he called a taxi and ordered the driver to take me to Cartagena. In a few minutes we were jouncing over the road outside of town.

Chapter Eleven

DURING MY STAY at the Barranquilla prison, I had been told that the best way for me to reach Panama was by way of San Andres and Providence, two Colombian islands near the coast of Panama, and that at Cartagena it would be easy to find a boat going to the islands for coconuts.

I went to the port to find out about the sailing dates and the price of the passage. A boat was leaving in five days and the cost was twenty pesos. I had thirty pesos—enough for my ticket but not enough to live on for the intervening period. I was in a quandary. There obviously was nothing for me to do but continue on to Panama on foot.

But before I left I determined to see if I could get some aid from the Cartagena newspaper, *El Mundo*.

"If I could do anything for you," said the editor, "I would be only too happy to do it. But the paper is in a critical position. Our presses have been taken away by the owner and we're printing the paper on this hand-press." He hesitated a moment, then: "Wait a minute! I have an idea. I'll print something in the paper about you and I'm sure you will get the money to continue your trip."

"Be careful," I warned. "Remember I just escaped from the Barranquilla prison, and I don't want to get into trouble with the police."

"Don't worry," he replied. "I'll word the article so they won't know who you are."

The next morning the following item appeared in the society column:

"René Belbenoit, French journalist, who has written several powerful articles for *La Prensa* of Barranquilla and the Bogotá *El Tiempo*, is now in Cartagena."

"As a result of several accidents on his trip across Colombia, Mr. Belbenoit is without resources and is in need of aid to continue his journey to Panama, where he has numerous friends."

"We hope that at Cartagena he will easily find someone who will help him, and we wish him good luck."

When I read this specious article, I could not repress a smile. The articles in *El Tiempo* had not been written by me. They had been written about me, and not in complimentary terms! As to the story of a journalist on a trip—I, who had just escaped from prison a hundred miles away—it was just too funny!

The item itself was of little use. I could use it to go from door to door begging for pennies. This was not my manner of doing things, but in my position I could not afford to be proud.

Armed with resolution, I called first on Mr. Lemaitre, a Frenchman who owned a soap factory. I told him my true story and asked for aid.

"Three years ago, some fugitives from Guiana broke this open," he said, showing me his strong-box. "They stole 4000 pesos." He gave me a searching glance. "But they aren't all the same. There are a few good ones; I hope you're one of them."

He gave me five pesos and wished me good luck, but I did not meet with as friendly a reception at the other houses I visited. By noon I was completely disgusted with begging.

I resolved to leave that night for Loric, where I had heard that an ex-convict, Charlot Gauthier, was living. For five pesos, I took passage on the side-wheeler which went up the Sinu River.

I did not know Gauthier personally, but I had known his accomplice in Guiana. They had been tried and convicted by a military court-martial in Shanghai, where their boat, the battleship *Jules Michelet*, was anchored. Following an orgy of drinking and opium smoking, the intoxicated sailors had attacked an officer. Though Gauthier had been only the lookout for his comrade, both had been sentenced to Devil's Island. Three months after their arrival in

Guiana they had escaped together, but only Gauthier succeeded in keeping his liberty. He had managed to reach Loric, where he found work as an electrician, and later was made manager of the power station.

At Loric I had no difficulty in finding Gauthier's address. My visit was an agreeable surprise for him. He had read my articles in *La Prensa* and was delighted to be able to talk to a man who had known the same vicissitudes as himself.

Though he earned only sixty pesos (about thirty dollars) a month, he lived well, in comparison with the other residents of Loric. He invited me to stay with him as long as I wished, and he introduced me to his wife, a young Colombian girl whom he had married a few months before.

I accepted his kind offer, telling him that this would give me an opportunity to wait for an answer from some friends in France, to whom I intended writing for aid. During this time I would be able to catch a few butterflies and try to mount some collections for sale.

As the next day was Sunday, a free day for Charlot, he came with me into the jungle. The butterflies were abundant, as I had expected, and I knew I would be able to earn some money.

We found a location for the chase, a ravine through which coursed a small creek, and I decided to stay in the jungle for a few weeks. I built a little hut of bamboo and palm fronds and arranged with Charlot to bring me food each Sunday.

For many years the convicts in French Guiana had been catching butterflies to sell, and had accumulated a great deal of information about their habits. While I was in the jungle camps I had learned to catch these beautiful insects and, profiting from the convicts' experience, had become something of an expert.

At the end of three weeks, I returned to Loric with more than a thousand butterflies, enough to mount twenty complete collections. I sent several to my friends in Barranquilla and sold the others at a low price to the notables of Loric. I kept the finest collection to sell at a higher price in Panama.

With this money, and three hundred francs which meanwhile had been sent me by my friend Francis Carco, the French writer and member of the Goncourt Academy, I felt that I had enough to continue my journey. I bought some clothes and a pair of shoes, made a package of my manuscript and my butterfly collection, and prepared to leave.

It was four hundred miles to Panama, and the only way to get there was

on foot. Charlot advised me to buy a burro to carry my baggage and to ride when I became tired. So, for five pesos, I bought a small donkey which I baptized "Toto."

Charlot accompanied me to the edge of Loric, to the trail that led to the beach.

"Bon voyage. Write me when you get to Panama," he smiled and shook my hand.

I prodded Toto with a stick, and we started down the trail. As I rode along I thought about Charlot, who had treated me like a brother. It was a shame that he had been so severely punished. I had been unable to discover in him any traces of that criminal mentality that I connected with the convicts of Devil's Island. Why hadn't the judges given him a chance? His life was broken; he would never see France again. But I consoled myself with the thought that he would make a new life in Colombia; he had all the necessary qualifications.

(Note: At the declaration of war in 1939, Charlot, Gauthier embarked for France and joined the Army under an assumed name. He fought in Belgium, participated in the retreat, and after the fall of France he succeeded in reaching North Africa and joining the forces of General de Gaulle, where he reclaimed his identity.)

The trip from Loric to Sao Tata lasted fifteen days and passed with no untoward incident. Everywhere I stopped I found the friendly hospitality which still exists in the countries which modern civilization has not yet spoiled. There always was a place for me to sleep and something to eat.

When I arrived in a village, fearing the questions of the police, I would ask immediately to see the *alcalde* (mayor). To this official I would show a clipping I had cut from the Bogotá newspaper, *El Tiempo*. The clipping announced the arrival in Colombia of the celebrated German entomologist, Von Rickerman. At the head of the column I had pasted a picture of myself I had cut from the *Barranquilla* newspaper.

Naturally I introduced myself to the *alcalde* as Von Rickerman. Before he could ask any questions, I showed him my marvelous collection of butterflies, telling him that I was in the vicinity in search of rare specimens of lepidoptera.

The mayor always took me at face value, never thinking to demand my identification papers and residence permit. In most cases I was invited to dine and spend the night in the *alcalde's* house.

By the following morning we would be close friends, and on my departure the *alcalde* would be sure to mention the great honor it had been to enter-

tain as his guest the famous scientist, Von Rickerman, the greatest entomologist in the world!

Beyond Sao Tata, my road led through the jungle and I was forced to get rid of Toto, my burro. It was a wrench to part with him for he had been a loyal friend, carrying my baggage and, on occasion, even myself. I felt sorry, too, that I had not had an opportunity to give him any dainties in reward for his faithful service.

I gave him to a little Negro for ferrying me across the Atrato River in his canoe. Toto watched me get into the pirogue, and when he saw it leaving shore he opened his huge mouth and brayed loudly, as if to bid me good-bye. Then he turned his back on me and began to munch grass serenely.

On the other side of the river was the jungle, and in the distance towered the Cordillera of the Andes, a long range of mountains beyond which lay Panama, my destination. Ten days more, I thought, and I would be there.

I spent that night in a cantina, and in the morning I bought supplies for my trip: a pound of coffee, a pound of sugar, four cans of corned beef, some salt, matches, cigarettes, and a variety of other essentials. I made a pack of this and strapped it to my back on top of my bundle of manuscript and papers. Then I took the first trail into the jungle.

An hour later I reached the end of the trail. Ahead was only unbroken jungle. I consulted the sun and, turning to the north, plunged into the dense growth.

Despite twelve years in Guiana, I had little knowledge of the jungle. During my various stays in the camps, and even though I had tried to escape through the jungle of Dutch Guiana, I had never been away from man-made trails. Like the other convicts, I firmly believed that an escape through the jungle was impossible.

Though there were no ferocious animals, as in the African jungles, its immensity awed me. An escape in this manner meant weeks or months of walking through matted undergrowth, with no contact with civilization or other human beings. And the fear of starvation stalked me. How was a white man to feed himself in the jungle?

But the fears that had assailed me years ago, and had prevented me from such an enterprise, no longer existed.

Perhaps it was because of my present reckless state of mind. The day our party left St. Laurent in a scrap of a boat that no sane man would use to cross the open sea, the folly had begun. The voyage from Guiana to Trinidad was a folly that had obliged

me to commit others, which in their turn would oblige me to commit many more before I reached my final goal—the United States.

Perhaps it was because of the deep faith I had in my case; that because I was a victim of injustice, I would succeed this time.

Or perhaps it was because I was certain I would not end my days in the jungle. Just as, many years before, when I lay half-dead in the hospital at St. Laurent and the doctors had given up hope, I had smiled and told them I would never leave my bones in Guiana.

Whatever the reason, I was no longer afraid. I pursued my way calmly and cheerfully, alive to the beauty and interest of my surroundings.

Everywhere was jungle—tangled jungle, where vines hung like rope ladders let down from on high. An undergrowth of dwarfed trees, stunted by the lack of sunlight. Here and there were palm bushes of the Awara family, their trunks covered with sharp, needlelike spines.

The atmosphere was humid, pervaded by the rank odor of rotting vegetation. The mosquitoes were everywhere, and when I brushed them off my face or legs, my hand came away covered with blood.

Sometimes a butterfly flickered by, a sparkle of blue light, then disappeared into the gloom of the forest. High in the trees, tribes of monkeys swung from branch to branch, chattering excitedly at my trespassing.

I WALKED straight on, taking my direction from the moss which always grows on the south side of the trees, going around large clumps of undergrowth, or, with my machete, chopping away the liana vines that barred my progress. The various creeks I crossed also helped to check my direction, for they all flowed from the Cordillera to the sea.

In the streams were many alligators, some of them as much as ten feet long, but they were not dangerous. I saw hundreds of them, swam in the creeks among them, and though they opened their huge mouths, showing rows of wicked teeth, they made no attempt to attack me. I came to the conclusion that alligators, at least those of South and Central America, are frauds.

When night approached I looked for a small clearing beside a stream to make camp. It was only a few minutes' work with my machete to cut the necessary leaves and tie them together in the form of a lean-to, using long thin poles for the frame. Inside, I made a bed of soft jungle grass. It was primitive, but comfortable.

Then I gathered wood and built a large fire to prepare my dinner, which

consisted of rice, half a can of corned beef, and coffee. By dark the fire would be roaring cheerfully in front of my little shelter, with enough wood piled beside it to last until morning.

A last cigarette and I would drop off to sleep until the screaming of the parrots awakened me at dawn.

Coffee once more, made on the glowing embers of the night's fire, and I would be on my way again.

On the seventh day I ate the last of my rice, and had only a little coffee left. I had come about fifty miles, and was still far from my destination. I would have to find some edible wild plant, for I had no firearms for hunting.

All the next day I hunted for something to eat. There were many trees covered with fruit that looked good, but I noticed that the fruit which had fallen on the ground remained intact. The monkeys had not touched it, so I judged it to be poisonous.

Contrary to general belief, there are no coconut or banana trees growing wild in the jungle. The coconuts grow wild only along the coast; those in the jungle are near habitations and were planted by man.

All I found was cabbage palm. I ate the heart, which is delicious to the taste but has little food value, and during the night hunger made itself felt as strongly as before.

On the morning of the ninth day I finished the last of my coffee, and started out as usual to look for some edible plant. About the middle of the morning I came to a group of Awara palms and noticed some red berries on the ground. Going closer, I recognized the tree from which they had fallen. I breathed a sigh of relief, then wondered why I had not thought of it before.

They were berries from the Comou palm, which contain a great deal of oil. A drink made of the Comou berries is very nourishing, so much so that a man could live on the liquid for months without losing his strength, even while doing hard work.

I took off my coat and filled the sleeves and pockets, then filled the empty space in the top of my can of papers. At the next creek I stopped for the night. I boiled some water in the can and when it had cooled to lukewarm I put a hundred berries in the water and crushed them. Then I let it stand over night.

By morning, three or four inches of oil had formed atop the berry juice. I poured the oil off, added some salt, and drank freely of the concoction. For the rest of the day I felt no hunger.

The blue waters of the distant ocean came into view on the twelfth day, and all day I walked toward the sea. At noon the next day I found a small trail and followed it, and in a few

hours I saw a small port in the distance, with several sailboats rising and falling with the swell in the tiny bay.

To my surprise, I discovered that I was in Puerto Obaldia, a Panamanian border town on the Atlantic Ocean side, which I could have reached easily had I followed the beach instead of going through the jungle.

I had expected to reach the Gulf of San Miguel on the Pacific side of Panama and follow the coast to Panama City, but I had forgotten that the isthmus turns northward at that point and that I should have gone west instead of north.

But what did it matter? I was in the Republic of Panama at last.

Chapter Twelve

PUERTO OBALDIA is a village of a few hundred population, Negroes for the most part, who work on plantations or cut mahogany in the jungle. A dozen stores do a thriving business with Colombian smugglers, selling them duty-free Japanese articles which they, in turn, sell in Colombia for a hundred- to a two-hundred-percent profit.

The Panamanian authorities do not require identification papers to enter the settlement, but, if strangers wish to embark for Colón, it is necessary to present a passport and post a bond of at least a hundred dollars.

I had only ten dollars and my identification was a work-certificate from the Panama Canal, where I had been employed four years before, during one of my previous attempts to escape to the United States.

I went to the alcalde and told him that I was an ex-employee of the Canal and wanted to return to Colón. He refused to give me a visa but offered to telegraph the Colón authorities for the necessary permission.

Knowing in advance what the reply would be, I thanked him and left, realizing there was nothing to do but continue on foot.

Passing a cantina, I decided to have something to eat while I planned my next move. The place was smoky and crowded, but I finally located an empty chair at a table with two other men. I sat down and ordered my meal.

While eating, I became acquainted with my table-mates, a Polish fellow and a Hindu. They were in the same straits as myself, having no passports and not enough money for the hundred-dollar bond required for departure by boat. They had been in town for several months, doing odd jobs for the blacks, who paid them a miserable pittance, and they had not even the money necessary to return to Colombia.

"But why haven't you gone on to Panama by land?" I asked.

"It's impossible," said the Pole. "We've tried it, but you can't get through the San Blas Indian territory."

"How far did you go?"

"To the first village, about eighteen miles from here. But the Indians wouldn't let us pass; they made us turn back—and pronto, too!"

"Why didn't you pass the village at night?" I persisted.

"We couldn't. The beach ends at the village and you have to take a boat from there."

"What about through the jungle?"

"My question set them laughing. I ignored their laughter and continued my questioning. "Which road goes to the Indian village?"

"Just follow the beach to the United Fruit Company's plantation. The village is four miles farther on."

"Thanks," I said. "I'm leaving in the morning."

"Alone?" chorused my new friends. "Yes, unless you want to come along."

The two men looked at each other. The dark face of the Hindu mirrored the expression on the lighter face of the Pole. I could guess what was passing in their minds; they thought I had money and, sure that I would buy supplies which would assure them of eating, they had everything to gain and nothing to lose. It would only cost them the trouble of coming back. With one accord, they turned to me. "We'll go with you."

As we approached the Indian village of Caretta, late the next afternoon, three husky, mean-looking Indians came out to meet us. Their faces were painted red and black, and their clothes consisted of a pair of pants and several gaudy bead necklaces. In Spanish, the Hindu asked to speak to the chief. The Indians made no reply but turned and led us down the one street of the village.

As we passed, the women came out of the palm-thatched huts and stood in the doorways, regarding us curiously.

Reaching a hut somewhat larger than the rest, two of our guides motioned us to wait while the third entered the house. A few seconds later he reappeared at the door with a stern-visaged Indian about 40 years old. Gruffly, the elder Indian spoke to us, inquiring our destination.

The Hindu replied that we wanted to go to Colón.

The chief frowned and pointed back to Puerto Obaldia. "Take boat," he said laconically.

"I told you they wouldn't let us through," the Pole said to me in an undertone.

Looking around, I saw that we were surrounded by scowling Indians, who had gathered during our conversation. The chief said something in Indian to them. Their faces darkened and they closed in menacingly.

The young Indian who had brought out the chief warned us to leave immediately.

We picked up our baggage and left the village, followed by a crowd of hostile Indians. At the edge of the village they stopped, watching us until we were out of sight around a bend in the trail.

Half a mile away I stopped and asked my companions what they intended to do.

"What can we do?" replied the Pole. "We have to go back to Puerto Obaldia."

"I'm staying here," I stated. "Tonight I'm going to try going around the village through the jungle. Do you want to go with me?"

"But that's impossible," objected the Hindu.

"Then you won't go with me?"

"No. We're going back."

I shrugged my shoulders. "All right. Here's a dollar for your machete. You can get another one in town."

We said good-by and they started off immediately, hoping to reach the United Fruit plantation before dark.

As soon as they were out of sight I went back to the village and asked to see the chief. He came out of his hut with an annoyed expression on his face and told me to go away. I made no answer, just continued to untie the strings around my bundle. Suspiciously, thirty Indians watched my every move. I brought out my box of butterflies and said, "Here, I'll show you a way you can make a lot of money."

The young Indian who spoke Spanish translated my words to the others and they all crowded around to see what was in the box. I pushed them away, then opened the box and showed the butterflies to the chief.

A cry of admiration rose from the group. They shoved each other aside to get a better view and pointed their fingers, exclaiming various names as they recognized the different species of butterflies.

I told the chief that I wanted to stay in the village for a few days to catch butterflies and that I would pay them a dollar for each one they brought me.

The chief called the young Indian who spoke Spanish and told him to take me to his hut. There I was given food and an evil-tasting drink which I forced myself to sip in spite of my repugnance.

All evening the Indians took turns coming in to see the butterflies, and

it was only with difficulty that each new group could persuade the present admirers to give up their places in front of the box. The children gradually lost their fear of me and were soon sitting on my lap and hunting through my pockets.

Finally the excitement died down, and an Indian led me to a deserted hut where I could sleep. I lay there in the dark, listening to the singing and talking in the village.

About midnight, when all was quiet, I crept out of the hut. Softly I tiptoed down to the beach where several canoes were drawn up on the sand. Picking a small one, with a sail wrapped around the mast, I carefully dragged it down to the water.

Without hoisting the sail, I got in and paddled noiselessly out around the cliff. Ten minutes later I was out of sight and sound of the village, and I put up the sail.

When dawn broke I had covered about thirty miles, and I felt more at ease. But as I feared to pass another Indian village, I decided to spend the day on the beach and continue on during the coming night. I pulled the canoe up on the sand and opened a few coconuts that were hanging low on the trees.

After my breakfast of coconut milk I began to get impatient. I was not at all tired and a day spent on the beach would be time lost. Too, if the Indians were after me, they might see the canoe on the beach and know where I was.

The beach stretched out before me, wide and straight, clear of cliffs and rocks as far as I could see. If it was like this all the way to Colón, I would have no further need of a boat.

I dragged the canoe up under the first low-hanging coconut trees and covered it with fronds. Then, tying my package on my back and my shoes over my shoulder by the strings, I began walking along the beach.

I had walked all morning when I caught sight of a group of Indians half a mile away. They had seen me, too, and were walking in my direction. They proved to be a man, a woman and a little girl, all with painted faces and half-naked.

They questioned me in their dialect, which I did not understand, so I opened my bundle and displayed my butterflies. They repeated the word "Momorro" several times and I concluded that this was the word for butterfly. They made signs for me to get into their canoe with them, and as they seemed friendly, I accepted their invitation.

My new acquaintances took me to their village. There were several hundred inhabitants, all of whom ran up and began jabbering like monkeys at

our approach. I showed them my butterflies, which were greeted with a chorus of "ohs" and "ahs," as at the previous village.

I still had a few packages of cigarettes left, and I offered some to the chief and several of his head men. They brought me some of their devilish brew to show their appreciation, and I countered with a gift of a few cans of food. Thus a friendly attitude was established.

I was bombarded with questions, probably about my destination and where I had come from—but as I understood nothing, I kept repeating "Colón," which word they seemed to recognize, for they responded by pointing to the north. I tried to make them understand that I was hunting butterflies, pantomiming the chase and capture of the insects. They must have thought my actions extremely ludicrous for they laughed uproariously.

Nevertheless, that my intentions were peaceful must have been clear to them, for they offered me food and led me to an empty hut. During the afternoon I took a siesta in the shade of the hut wall, two little Indians sleeping trustfully beside me. Apparently I had gained their complete confidence.

When I awakened I walked about the village, accompanied by a score of older Indians who talked to me constantly. I answered them in Spanish and the conversation continued amicably, neither side understanding the other.

I spent the evening in the chief's house, conversing with him as I had with the others. There was such an atmosphere of friendliness and goodwill among these kind-hearted Indians that I almost regretted having to leave them to continue my journey. But after the village was settled for the night, I crept down to the beach and appropriated another canoe, this time bringing along a coconut shell for bailing.

A fairly stiff breeze was blowing and, in a few minutes, I had placed considerable distance between me and the talkative savages. Under the bright tropical moon it was easy to avoid the rocks and reefs, but toward dawn clouds obscured its light and it became dangerous and difficult to navigate the passages.

The first faint glow of the false dawn was in the sky when I heard the familiar burble and crash that indicated the presence of rocks. In vain I searched for the line of white that would show the exact location of the danger. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a huge comber picked up the canoe and flung it across a submerged reef.

I found myself in the water, gasping for breath. The beach seemed at least a mile away. While debating what to do, my feet touched the bottom; the water was less than three feet deep, for I was standing on a submerged rock. I pulled the canoe to me and tried to right it, but it was useless. It was far too heavy for me to handle, and after such a crash it would probably have leaked too badly to use.

On the rock I was safe, so I held onto the bundle that contained my manuscript and all my worldly possessions and waited for daylight.

As I had estimated in the darkness, the beach proved to be about a mile away. So at daylight, swimming and wading, I fought my way through the breakers to shore. Resting on the sand, I discovered that my hands and feet had been severely cut and scratched by the barnacles on the rocks. In the excitement and effort of clinging to the rock, I had not noticed it before.

I tore my shirt in strips to bind my feet, and after a short rest I limped along the beach until I reached another native settlement.

This was Gallinaso, the main village of the San Blas Indians, with a population of more than three thousand. As white traders come each month to buy coconuts, the Indians are accustomed to the presence of whites and many speak some Spanish.

The cacique, head chief of all the San Blas tribes, spoke fluent Spanish, and again my butterflies served as a passport.

He showed me a large collection of old shoes that had been given to him by five or six presidents of the Republic of Panama. The collection was a source of pride to the cacique and a source of continual wonder to his subjects.

I was unable to eat the food they generously provided, but I had about three dollars left and could afford to buy some eggs. However, they did not seem offended at my peculiar taste in food, and were as friendly as the other Indians I had met.

That night I appropriated my third canoe and continued toward Colón. Following the same procedure, I subsequently used a fourth canoe, then a fifth.

One week after my departure from Puerto Obaldia, I arrived at the village of Ostupot. There I was told that I could reach Colón by following the beach, and for the first time I spent the entire night in a village.

Leaving Ostupot in the morning, I followed the coast for several miles. My path along the beach led in an easterly direction, so I decided to take a short-cut through the jungle, hoping to save several hours of walking.

That night I spent in the jungle, and morning found me trying to find my way back to the coast. After walking all morning, I came to a low mountain range; the beach was on the other side.

I was out of breath when I had climbed only a short way. I had to stop frequently to rest. My strength seemed to have deserted me. My bundle of manuscript and papers felt as though it weighed a ton, and I was forced to rest for longer and longer periods. Something was wrong. I took my pulse. Fever!

Unfastening my pack, I lay down to rest for an hour or two. I had nothing more to eat, and I began to feel thirsty, for I had not passed a stream since I had started my ascent. I must reach the beach at all costs—and soon.

I DROVE myself into action, but it was useless. I gathered some wood, every moment a dragging torture, and lighted a fire before I collapsed. The long hours passed as I lay there half-conscious, cramping chills alternating with burning fever. Toward sundown I tried to stir my sluggish muscles to build a shelter, but I had to content myself with dragging a branch over the fire to smoke away the mosquitoes.

That night was terrible. I turned and twisted in delirium, half-mad with thirst and devoured by mosquitoes. When day came I licked a few drops of dew from the grass and leaves, which relieved me somewhat, and staggered on up the hill.

Every hundred yards I had to rest. It was a horrible nightmare, in which I was climbing an endless mountain, some unknown power forcing me to get up each time I fell, and to stumble on again. In my dazed and incoherent mind I had forgotten why I had to get there; I felt only the driving urge to reach the top. After what seemed like days of falling down, struggling to my feet and scrambling on, I became aware that the ground no longer rose, and with this realization, I blanked out.

My head was clearer when I regained consciousness, but I was still feverish and aware of extreme hunger and thirst. At the bottom of the hill I saw water and coconut trees. I could hardly wait to reach them. I ran on wobbly legs, slipping and sliding down the mountainside. The slope grew steeper and the weight of my body and pack gave me too much momentum. To arrest my precipitous descent, I grabbed at a tree. . . . I let out a shriek of pain!

The tree was an Awara palm, the bark covered with needlelike spines, and my hands were full of thorns. Slowly and painfully, I extracted them

one by one, gritting my teeth, for the sharp barbs were very painful and mildly poisonous.

Finally I gained the bottom of the hill. There, flowing down the center of a half-dried creek bed, trickled a tiny rivulet of clear water. Throwing myself face-down, I drank until I felt I would burst.

Refreshed, I made my way along the creek bed, certain that it would lead me to the ocean. But darkness came and there was still no break in the dense forest. I would have to spend another night in the jungle.

Hunger tortured me. I had eaten nothing for two days and my stomach never ceased reminding me of the fact. All night my fitful sleep was broken by dreams of steak and French-fried potatoes, which disappeared just as I started to eat.

The next day I was even weaker. The false strength of delirium had dissipated as my fever went down, leaving my mind clear but my body exhausted. The creek curved leisurely through the jungle fastnesses, making hundreds of detours, but I could not afford to risk losing my way by taking a short-cut as I had done before.

A few hours more and I saw the sea, shimmering through the trees. Forgetting my fatigue, I ran to the beach, grabbed a coconut, split it open with my machete, and drained the milk.

THAT night I slept in an abandoned hut, and the mosquitoes bothered me less.

The next morning I met two Indians who took me to Tigre, their village. A stealthy departure in a borrowed cayuco seemed better to me than walking along the beach or cutting through the jungle, so for the ninth or tenth time I left an Indian village in the night.

With the first faint streak of dawn, I landed on what I thought was a deserted island. To my surprise it was inhabited by several Negro families. I was told that it was twenty miles to Porvenir, the first Army station in Panama, and that there were no more Indian villages along the way.

I refused their offer to take me to Porvenir, deciding to continue by canoe that night. The simple blacks were amazed that a white man wanted to go to sea at night in a difficult-to-manage Indian cayuco, but they did not try to discourage me.

They gave me rice and fish, and I ate a meal such as I had not had for more than three weeks.

As soon as it was dark I left them, and passed Porvenir two hours later. My stomach was full and I had a few bananas, so I determined to push on to Colón without stopping.

I had friends in Panama, and I felt that in twenty-four hours my troubles would be over.

Chapter Thirteen

NOW THE BEACH was clear and even, with no more rocks, reefs or islands, and I was sailing about a mile offshore. From time to time I saw a village—but, in an Indian cayuco, coming from the San Blas district, I was in great danger of being arrested, and I dared not stop.

The day passed quickly, and with night the breeze freshened, pushing my little craft along at a rapid pace. Though my clothes were wet with spray and I had eaten nothing all day, I felt no hunger or cold. My mind was occupied with one thought only—a few hours more and I would be in Colón, where I would find a clean, civilized bed and bath, and then on to the United States!

About ten in the evening I glimpsed the searchlights of Cristobal. Ships were anchored in the harbor, doubtless waiting for daylight to go through the Canal. The lights from their cabins reflected in the calm water. I breathed an involuntary sigh of relief. Civilization at last!

Gradually I drew closer to the lights. My clothes were soaking wet, I had lost my shoes, and I had not shaved for three weeks.

Soon I saw the buildings on piles that housed the Canal employees, and I knew I was in the Canal Zone proper. I tried to guide the canoe toward a stretch of beach a short distance from the town, but the current was too strong and I was carried toward the docks. A hundred yards from shore I realized that my frail craft was going to crash into a breakwater.

Scuttling the canoe, so its presence would not start an investigation, I grabbed my package of manuscript and struck out for shore.

I pulled myself up on the wharf, stumbled over to a warehouse and collapsed before the locked door. I began trembling violently, more from relief than from fatigue or hunger; for at long last I was safe under the Stars and Stripes.

I must have fallen asleep, for the next thing I knew a policeman was prodding me with his foot and saying, "Get up, buddy! You can't sleep it off here. Come on, get up!"

Blinking dazedly, I stood up. The policeman smiled knowingly and winked. "That must have been some bender!"

As I staggered sleepily through the warehouse district on my way to the French Quarter, it finally seeped through my befuddled mind that the officer had thought I was sleeping off

a drunk. This became more clear as I walked along the nearly empty streets—it was Sunday morning and everyone was resting from his Saturday-night spree.

Between the Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama there is no frontier. A strip of land, ten miles wide, on each side of the Canal is American territory, and the border at Colón is a street. This street is easily recognized, for on the American side the shrubs are trimmed and the houses well cared for; while on the other side are tumble-down shacks.

With a pang of nostalgia, I turned right to "Cash Street," as the streets reserved for licensed prostitutes are called. I went up to one of the houses and asked if there were any French girls there.

The woman gave me a searching glance. Then, apparently deciding that I was not a prospective customer, she pointed a finger toward a girl across the street.

"Ella es una Francesita," she directed.

I crossed the street and approached a small piquant brunette, who had been watching the incident with sharp brown eyes.

"Êtes vous Française?" I asked. "Oui," she replied. "Can I help you?"

I recognized her accent and knew she really was French; so without hesitation I whispered, "I came from *la-bas*."

"*La-bas*!" she exclaimed. Taking me by the arm, she pulled me inside her room and closed the door behind us.

"When did you arrive?" she inquired when we were seated.

"Just a few hours ago. I landed in the Zone after spending the night in a canoe on the ocean. My clothes are still wet."

"You'll have to tell me all about it later. Now I must get you something to eat." Then she exclaimed, "You have no shoes!"

"I lost them when my boat capsized. I'll have to get another pair."

She went to a closet, brought out a bathrobe and handed it to me. "Take off your clothes and let them dry," she ordered, and went out.

A FEW minutes later she returned with a pot of coffee and a pile of sandwiches. I told her my story briefly and asked about my friends. Unfortunately, she had just arrived from Argentina and knew nothing about them.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I'm going to take the train to Panama City."

"There's a train at ten o'clock. But I'd advise you not to take it in town.

Take a bus to Mount Hope and catch it there. It'll be safer."

She gave me a pair of shoes, and I shaved and dressed. I said good-by, promising to write her from Panama and return the five dollars which she had so generously lent me.

I reached Panama City with no trouble, but on my arrival I was faced with a new disappointment. My friends had all departed, and, as I had only a few cents left, I was forced to turn to the newspapers again.

At the *Panama-America* office, I went to the information desk. "I want to see a reporter."

"On what subject?" asked the *señorita* in charge.

"Personal," I replied.

After glancing through my clippings from the Colombian and Trinidad newspapers, a reporter took me to Ted Scott's office. Mr. Scott spoke French and it was easy to talk to this friendly man. When I had concluded my recital, he excused himself and went out to talk with his colleagues.

On his return, he gave me twelve American dollars that had been contributed by these same colleagues. "Come back at midnight. I'm going to try to sell your story to the American papers."

Thanking him warmly for his generosity, I left the office, much encouraged by this new turn of events.

At midnight I was back. This time I was introduced to a Mr. Calhoun, representative of the *New York Times*, who asked me to write my story for his paper. I went to work and Ted Scott translated the article for me.

The article was published in the *New York Times* and later in various magazines.

"What are you going to do now?" inquired Mr. Calhoun.

"I'm going on to the United States as soon as possible."

"It's not a very good time for that," he advised. "Panama has just had a Presidential election, and there's some confusion about the results. Both candidates claim the office. The borders are well guarded because the Government is afraid of a revolution and is on the alert for arms smuggling. You'd better wait until the trouble is over."

"But what can I do? I can't stay in town. I'll be arrested."

"Well, that is a problem." Mr. Calhoun thought a minute. "I'll tell you what you can do: I have a friend, a Mr. Janson, who has a banana plantation in the Darien province. It's in the middle of the jungle and I'm sure no one will bother you there. I'll ask him if you can stay with him."

Two days later I was on a broad-beamed banana boat, winding through the jungle up the Tuira River. We

made slow progress, stopping at every little hamlet to warn the natives to have their bananas ready when the boat came back.

Deep in the jungle, at El Real, I left the banana boat and took a small launch on up the river to Yape.

There, in the middle of a clearing, were three small houses set on stilts. In the background were rows and rows of banana trees, heavy with fruit. A man in tropical whites was on hand to meet the launch. This was Ralph Beardsley, the manager of the plantation. After reading my letter of introduction, he greeted me with utmost friendliness.

A bluff, hearty individual, Beardsley resembled his fellow countrymen, the Canadian trappers. His life had been a series of adventures that would have made an interesting and amusing book. During World War I he had fought with the British Army in France, and when the war was over he had come to Central America.

The jungle was his passion. Every time he could afford a day of leisure, he would leave the plantation early in the morning, his gun under his arm and his compass in his pocket, to spend the day in his beloved jungle.

Such was the man with whom I spent many long days and weeks. He insisted that a hammock be hung in his own house for me, and we took all our meals together. Though he never seemed to suffer from the loneliness of this out-of-the-way settlement, he enjoyed the company of a white man. I learned many things from this adventurous and jungle-wise man, and it was impossible not to love his unfeigned kindness and sympathy.

I spent my days helping Ralph or hunting butterflies along the trails and in the clearings. Early in the mornings I filled a gasoline can with ripe bananas and distributed them along the trail. When the sun was high, each pile of bananas would have its quota of butterflies, half-drunk on the sweet. I had only to pick them up.

Then, one day, I had to hide in the jungle while some police officers searched the plantation for me.

Ralph and I discussed the situation that evening. We decided that the French Consul had requested the Panama police to look for me, after he had learned of my presence from a long article in the *Panama-America*, which had been reproduced from the story I had written for the *New York Times*.

"I can't stay on here," I remarked. "The police will surely come back. I guess I'd better go up the river and across the Cordillera, back into Colombia."

"Why don't you hide out for a while with the Cuna Indians?" sug-

gested Ralph. "They like you, and I'm sure they will let you stay with them. You'll be safe there. No whites have ever been in that section of Darien."

"That sounds like a good idea."

"And you could buy pigs and chickens from the Indians and come in occasionally to sell them," he added. "That way you can earn some money, and when the excitement dies down you can come back and I'll help you get to Panama."

So it was decided. The next morning I went into the jungle to find Mano, a Chokoi Indian who had become my friend, and asked his opinion of the plan.

"Cunas good Indians," he assured me. "They know of 'little white man' who hunts butterflies." They let you build hut in village."

That settled it. I would start at once.

Chapter Fourteen

I TOOK A PIROGUE and paddled up the Tuira River for two days, camping at night in tiny huts along the bank. The third night I found myself at the mouth of the Paya River. Thirty miles up this stream was Paya, my destination.

All the next day I paddled against the current, threading my way up the narrow river under an archway of spreading jungle trees. It was like a movie set. The tall grass and bushes grew down to the edge of the water, and now and then I heard a faint *plop* or a rustle of leaves as some small animal skittered away at my approach. Sometimes the raucous shrieks of jungle birds broke the silence and I would see a flash of brilliant plumage against the glossy green leaves. When a whole flock was disturbed, it was like looking at a kaleidoscope, with vivid blues, deep purples, violent reds, gaudy orange and glowing yellows, all scintillating in changing movement.

I pushed deeper and deeper into this jungle paradise. By the time the dappled sunlight on the water had disappeared and the light grew dim, I was so tired from the unaccustomed exertion that I made camp on the bank of the stream.

The next morning, after three hours' paddling, I came around a bend and saw the huts of the village of Paya. There were thirty or more Indians standing on the bank to meet me. I turned my pirogue in to shore, and four or five young boys waded into the water to help me land.

To my surprise, my Chokoi Indian friend, Mano, was there to meet me. Beardsley had sent him through the jungle to arrange for my reception,

and he had arrived the evening before. As he led me to the chief's house, we were followed by a train of Indians, who eyed my boxes curiously.

The Captain, or Chief, a large-boned, stocky man about 40 years old, with Mongoloid features, met me at the door, smiling. He motioned for me to lie down in one of the hammocks and he took another near by. Then, with Mano as interpreter, he proceeded to question me.

"Why you want live with Indians?" I explained that I liked the Indians very much and that I had come to help them by buying their pigs and chickens in return for rice, beads or whatever they needed.

The Captain and Mano held a short conversation in their own song tongue, Mano apparently telling him of my good behavior and that I did not want gold nor desire to make slaves of them. Then Mano led me to the barracks where the young braves lived.

"Tomorrow, Captain will make big talk with tribe," Mano told me. "If Indians say 'yes'—you stay."

"Do you think they'll let me stay?" I asked.

"Yes. All know little man with butterflies. They know you good to Indians."

THAT afternoon I walked around the village. The women were well-formed and with good carriage; their only defect seemed to be poor teeth. They regarded me interestedly, smiling broadly and showing their toothless gums if I looked in their direction, or darting quickly into their houses if I came too close.

The men, lolling in their hammocks or resting in the shade, took great pains to show their indifference, turning their heads or staring at me coldly if I caught their eyes.

The children followed me everywhere, trying to touch my clothes, but any attempt to take their hands sent them off crying in fear.

Paya is built on a rise at the turn of the river; thus it is on a small peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides. This spot is high in the Cordillera, and at this point the river is swift and dangerous, so the location forms a natural protection for the village. It is composed of a dozen large barracks, about thirty by sixty feet, one family to each house. Only about a hundred Indians live in the village, but there are several hundred more belonging to the village who live in the surrounding jungle.

I ate dinner with Mano. In the dim light of the oil lantern the barracks seemed less bare, although a few boxes of personal possessions and a line of hammocks comprised the furnishings. From a near-by house I

could hear voices chattering and singing while Mano told me about the tribe.

The Cunas have a marked preference for anything made of silver. Their rings and jewelry always are of this metal, and they have a great repugnance for the gold which abounds in the creeks near their villages. Apparently the massacres of the peace-loving Indians during the Spanish conquest still remain in their memories. The Spaniards' lust for gold has led these gentle people to believe that all white men will kill for this precious metal, and to prevent further invasion of their territory, many legends have grown up about evil spirits that haunt the gold-bearing streams.

The village was quiet by the time Mano and I had finished talking. We retired to our hammocks, where I lay for a long time, musing about this strange tribe. Where did they come from? Their skin is white and their hair is sleek and black like the Chinese. Their features have a definite Mongoloid cast and they are often called the White Indians of Darien. They have no art forms, and the ancients have left no monuments to their culture.

Though they are called savage and primitive, they have a peace that would be edifying to the so-called civilized nations of the world. They are gentle and never quarrel among themselves. They are monogamists and extremely loyal to wife and family. Any stories which have been published, describing them as ferocious, are purely imaginary.

That night I slept like the dead, and the early morning bustle of the village did not disturb me. When finally I awoke, the sun was streaming in the door of the barracks and I found myself alone. Stretching sleepily, I went to the door; there an amazing sight met my eyes.

The streets (if one could call them that) were filled with people, laughing and gossiping. Women, in sea-green dresses covered with hand-blocked swastika designs, stood in groups talking or threaded their way among the lesser-clad men, the rattle of their bead bracelets and anklets adding to the blur of sound. Children gambled between the houses, playing a primitive game of tag. They all bore the tribal mark, which was one vertical and two horizontal stripes painted in black on the nose. This marking lent a weird expression to the impish faces.

As I walked toward the Captain's huge barracks, I saw still more Indians coming into the village. From the jungle whole families were arriving, walking single-file down the trail. The children led the parade, then the

wife, loaded with heavy bundles, and last the husband, striding along proudly, bow and arrows in hand.

I arrived just in time for the meeting, for as I stood there watching, the Captain and the medicine-man came through the crowd and entered the house. Following them, the rest of the Indians poured into the house. Mano appeared beside me and we went in with them.

Inside the barracks, which was 120 feet long by 40 feet wide, were rows upon rows of benches. In the center was a clear space where three hammocks were hung and beyond this were still more benches. The men seated themselves on the benches near the door, the Captain and the medicine-man took two of the hammocks, and the women gathered in the rear.

MANO then led me to the center of the house and a place was made for me on the front row of the men's benches near the Captain. Nothing was said to me, so I sat quietly watching the turmoil around me. Suddenly the crowd parted and a wizened old man, who must have been nearly 80, walked through and took his place in the third hammock. Mano whispered that this was the ancestor of the tribe. Because of his years, he was considered to have attained great wisdom and acted as adviser to the Captain.

Then the "reunion" commenced. The Captain, chanting in his shrill voice, addressed the medicine-man. Occasionally the medicine-man responded in the same tone.

It was like a scene from the books of James Fenimore Cooper that I had read in my childhood. Here were the painted Indians having a council, the braves passing the pipe of peace (in this case a modern pipe), and the women in the background. All that was missing were the plumed head-dresses.

Late in the afternoon, after an all-day session, the Captain arose and called Mano to interpret.

"You brother now!" Mano interpreted to me. "You live here. Hammock in barracks for you—*chicha*, too. We respect you, you respect us. Bring no more whites here. No go to Rio Maldito (Cursed River) where gold is found."

I promised faithfully to obey the Captain's injunctions, happy to discover that they were so easy to abide by. But my bubble of joy was punctured at his next words.

"Must take wife in two months—or leave. Man without wife always look at other men's wives. Not good man live alone. Need wife for do work."

Well, I thought, in two months he may change his mind—or perhaps I might change mine!

The Captain was speaking again. "Tomorrow, you start build house. I give you four men to help you. You give them rice and *brevia* (chewing tobacco) for work."

That seemed to be all, for the medicine-man came up and painted my face red, marking the tribal sign on my nose in black. The Indians burst out laughing and I joined in the fun. I must have been a weird sight with my painted face.

"Ni-kat-chi-pou!" shouted one of the Indians. The word was echoed by others and soon the building rang with sound as they all chorused, "Ni-kat-chi-pou!"

This was my new name; later I learned that it meant "white man."

The Captain's daughters passed the *chircha* around (the Indians' favorite and foul-tasting drink) and followed it with platters of barbecued pork, broken off in huge chunks. This time I was treated as a guest of honor, being served immediately after the Captain and his advisers.

Then the "reunion" was over. In less time than it takes to tell it, the suburban Indians had disappeared into the jungle and down the river. A few of the village Indians accompanied me to my barracks, showing their friendliness in every way, but they did not stay. Everyone was tired from the long and exciting day and the village soon dropped into slumber without the usual accompaniment of songs and laughter.

Chapter Fifteen

EVERY MORNING at sunrise a young Indian boy, chosen by the Captain, came out of his house and stood in front of the door. Throwing back his sleepy, tousled head, he made a loud wailing sound between his cupped hands to announce the arrival of the day. In a few seconds the village was seething with life; the Indians were pouring out of their houses, talking and laughing, and running down to the river for their morning swim.

For the first few days I went to the river in my shorts, but the Indians laughed so at my attire that soon I bathed as they did, in the costume of Adam.

After the swim, the men went hunting or into the fields, and the women stayed behind to cook.

Two days after the reunion I was supervising the building of my new house when an Indian came running through the village, shouting breathlessly, "Pigsi! Pigsi!"

Five minutes later the entire village, armed with bows and arrows, had melted into the jungle. Curious, I followed along behind.

The village of Paya is at the extreme end of a deep valley which extends some forty miles into Colombia. At the other end lies Arquia. In this valley a large herd of wild pigs wander about, moving slowly from one end to the other.

When the pigs reach Paya the natives rush out and kill all they can, usually about twenty or thirty. Then the herd, stampeding in mad fear, runs back toward safety. They move slowly to the other end of the valley, arriving at Arquia about two weeks later. As at Paya, the natives there kill as many as they can, driving the herd back toward Paya. This has gone on for longer than the oldest villager can remember.

The Indians slipped quietly through the undergrowth to a large clearing where the unsuspecting pigs were feeding, and surrounded them. Then, with a wild cry, they all dashed into the open space, shooting. The pigs scattered and ran down the valley, though not until the Indians had killed some of them.

Amid much rejoicing, the slaughtered animals were carried into the village, where the Captain divided the meat according to the needs of each family. . . .

In a week my house was completed. It was the smallest in the village and the only one built on posts above the ground. The walls and floor were of bamboo; the roof was covered with palm fronds. Notches cut in a balsawood log served as a ladder to my lofty perch.

The interior was furnished with a hammock, a table made from a packing-case, and some seats fashioned from tree trunks. On the wall I had hung my butterfly net, my carbine and several different-colored beads from toucans that I had killed since my arrival.

I was rapidly becoming a man of substance. For a few packages of cigarettes, the Captain had given me an old pirogue, and for the same medium of exchange, other Indians had provided me with bow and arrows for hunting and fishing.

Most of my time was spent in the jungle catching butterflies. I cooked my own food, exchanging various articles for chickens and eggs, which the Indians liked to raise but which they rarely consumed.

I picked up a few words of their language from the few Indians who spoke a little Spanish, and they became accustomed to my presence. In the afternoon, when the sun was high, I rested in my hammock and there were always a few young Indians to keep me company.

One young Indian, named José, came into the jungle with me every day. His family lived in Pucro, and

he had often been in the Panamanian villages along the Rio Tuira to sell bananas from his father's plantation. We became close friends because of his ability to speak Spanish, and he taught me how to hunt the abundant game and to recognize the various trees and vines which furnish food in case of necessity.

José was very intelligent and often questioned me about the various countries I had visited. I answered him as well as I could, but sometimes it was difficult to give him a satisfactory explanation.

On one occasion José saved my life. We had been hunting and had stopped in an old hut to rest. A branch was hanging from the roof and I yanked at it, trying to pull it down.

Like a streak of light, an arrowlike object buried itself in the nape of my neck. It was a tiny "grage" snake, a member of the deadly bushmaster family, that had been resting on the branch. We called it the "minute" snake in Guiana, for its bite was fatal in sixty seconds or less.

Quick as thought, José pulled out his hunting-knife and told me to lower my head so he could cut away the poisoned section before the poison had seeped through my system. But I was afraid of the pain of such an operation. Breaking open a cartridge, I told him to empty the powder into the wound and light it with a match. The pain was severe, but it seemed easier to me than being cut with a knife.

We went back to the village, where I lay down in my hammock. In a few minutes I felt a sharp pain up my arm and then another in my armpit. The pain lasted for several days, then disappeared. I stayed in my hammock nearly all the time, for I was very weak.

Rachiti, a young Indian girl, came to prepare my meals. She was smaller than most of the Indian women and quite attractive. She lived with her parents in the house nearest me and I had often given her lipsticks, matches and other trifles dear to an Indian girl's heart. Shyly, she would accept them, thanking me in the Indian tongue, then she would walk a short distance away before she sat down to examine her treasures.

Rachiti spoke no Spanish. Through the long days of my convalescence she went quietly about the house, preparing meals and serving my every want, speaking no words and disappearing like a deer if I attempted to engage her in conversation. Attentive and gentle, she seemed glad to be able to repay my gifts with faithful service. But she was unwilling or too shy to talk with me.

I had been in Paya nearly two months, when one day the Captain came to see me. He brought José along as interpreter and, after settling himself in a hammock, he began to talk.

"He asks if you like Paya," interpreted José.

"Yes," I replied. "I'd like to stay here always."

THERE was a long silence. The Captain puffed at his pipe and I waited politely for him to continue.

"You have to have wife. Only one woman in village not married—my sister. I not know if she come live with you."

I shuddered. His sister was a huge virago of a woman, the ugliest in the village.

"What about the girl Rachiti?" I suggested.

"Rachiti?" he exclaimed. "She no good. She too weak to work. She not know how paddle canoe. She no good."

"But I have no fields," I argued, "and she can learn how to paddle a canoe."

The Captain and José held a short conversation in Indian. Suddenly they burst out laughing.

"What did he say?" I asked.

"He say you like Rachiti because she best *chicha* maker in village. He say you very smart!" José laughed again.

The Captain rose from the hammock and left the house with José, who came back alone a few minutes later.

"You go see parents of Rachiti," he instructed. "Take plenty presents. Ask Rachiti come."

"What will the other Indians say?"

"Nothing. Rachiti too young, she only 15. She weak. No Indian want her for wife."

Half an hour later I presented myself at Rachiti's house, bringing several yards of cloth and some rice for her parents. José again served as interpreter. After a two-hour palaver, her parents told me they would consent, if Rachiti was agreeable.

The Indians are very respectful of the rights of their children. When a baby is born, it is given a field, some fruit trees and some animals, all of which become the property of the infant and may not be sold without the child's permission. One day I asked an Indian how much he wanted for a 250-pound pig I had seen in his enclosure. He replied that it belonged to his daughter and we would have to ask her if she wanted to sell. It was only after many presents of candy and beads that the two-year-old child agreed to the sale. The parents then fixed the price and put the money away for their daughter.

Rachiti and her parents held a short conference and I was told that she was willing to live in my house. José went off to tell the Captain, who sent runners into the jungle to announce a "reunion," while I made preparations to go in to Yape to sell some pigs and chickens and bring back some rum for the fiesta that would follow my marriage.

I had been in Yape twice during the last two months. The first time, Beardsley had told me that Don Pablo Othon, the congressman for Darien Province, had asked him to let me know that I was no longer wanted by the authorities of Panama. On my last visit two letters had come for me. One was from the North American Newspaper Alliance, enclosing a fifty-dollar check in payment for my story, "I Am a Fugitive from Devil's Island." The other, postmarked French Guiana, came from Dadar. Dadar reminded me of my promise to send him some money, and stated that he and the other fugitives had been condemned to a year at hard labor for the escape. Panama had committed suicide in his cell. Bebert had been killed in a knife-fight with another convict.

I SPENT two days at Yape, sold my chickens and pigs, and having filled my pirogue with provisions, set out for Paya.

On my return to Paya I went directly to Rachiti's house to give her parents the presents I had brought: six yards of cloth to make a dress for the mother, and several bricks of chewing-tobacco and some shot and powder for the father. I had also brought each of them several lipsticks for painting their faces on the day of fiesta.

The reunion that had been called for the marriage ceremony took place the next morning, and the Captain's house was full. I sat on a bench between the hammocks of the Captain and the medicine-man. A few minutes later Rachiti's family came in. Rachiti followed them, a basket of fruit balanced on her head and a bowl of *chicha* in her hand.

She passed through the assembled Indians and stopped in front of me. Setting the bowl on the ground, she offered me some bananas from the basket. I took one and ate it. Then she offered me the bowl of *chicha*, which she had prepared herself. With a straight face, I choked down the wretched stuff and smacked my lips loudly to indicate that I had found it delicious.

The Indians shouted gleefully. The ceremony was over, and now the party could begin. The *chicha* was passed, the roast pig was passed, and the Indians ate prodigious amounts.

All day and all night the fiesta continued. Young Indians, half-drunk, danced. Marching in single-file, their hands on the shoulders of the man in front, they sang and yelled, more drunk with their singing and yelling than from the *chicha*.

That night I stayed at Rachiti's house, sleeping in a hammock that she had made.

In the morning she followed me to my house, carrying everything she owned: some chickens, a small pig, her hammock and a box containing her jewelry and clothes. Behind us trailed a group of inquisitive Indians.

At the foot of the notched balsawood log that was my staircase, I stepped aside to let Rachiti mount first. She came up to the ladder and stopped also. I made motions for her to go up, but she did not move.

At this the Indians guffawed loudly. Bewildered by this mirth, I stared at them. Finally someone in the group who spoke a little Spanish came to my rescue.

"You go house first. Rachiti come behind." The words were barely understandable, so hard was the speaker laughing.

Taking his advice, I started up. But my foot slipped on the second notch and I tumbled to the ground. By now the Indians were doubled up with laughter and my new bride was joining in the fun.

Red to the ears, I picked myself up and tried it again. This time I managed to reach my lofty abode with no further mishap, and Rachiti followed me like a faithful dog. As many Indians as possible crowded into our small quarters and sat down on their haunches to watch what the newlyweds would do.

RACHITI, apparently oblivious of our audience, began unpacking her belongings and arranging them about the house. I tried to help her, especially with the heavier articles, but every time I made a move the Indians roared with laughter. Finally I gave up in disgust and lay down in my hammock, pretending a great indifference to the whole thing.

I must have dozed off, for when I awoke, Rachiti had already made great progress toward dinner. She was sitting beside the fire, encouraging the flame with a palm-leaf fan. I peered into the huge pot boiling over the fire and saw that she had made a stew of green bananas, yuccas, sweet potatoes and wild pig.

Distressed at the thought of eating the indigestible mess, I made frantic motions, trying to convey my feelings to her. She looked up at me blankly. I took the pot off the fire and let the contents cool to feed to the pigs, then killed a chicken and put it to boil.

Our uninvited visitors, who had all this time been calmly sitting and smoking, followed me around like a lot of curious puppies. In and out of the house, back and forth, as I worked, they followed me, completely mystified by my operations.

The crowd of watchers steadily increased, the mysterious grapevine somehow letting the rest of the village know that something unusual was going on. By the time the chicken was in the pot and I had opened a can of sardines and offered them to Rachiti, about sixty Indians had gathered. They were in the house; they were in the yard, crowding forward to see in the door; some had even climbed up in near-by trees to get a better view.

JOSE, who had been out in the jungle, arrived as we were eating the sardines. I asked him to tell Rachiti that from now on I would do the cooking.

This created no small scandal in the village. The Captain, Rachiti's parents and about a dozen other Indians made formal calls to explain that this was not proper. I could not say that I did not like their food, so I told them that I had brought rice and sardines and that I preferred this to wild pig. This was understandable to them, for they were all partial to sardines and rice, and traded me their pigs and chickens in exchange for these foods.

So Rachiti did very little cooking, except for preparing the *chicha* when guests came to visit us.

From my diary, November 11, 1936:

I have been with the Indians for four months and I am perfectly accustomed to this mode of life. I paint my face as they do and wear several strings of beads around my neck, one of which was given to me recently by Rachiti.

I can now make myself understood a little in the Indian language. When I go into a house I lie down on a hammock beside my host while his wife and daughters bring us *chicha*. I have even acquired the habit of speaking in their tone of voice, that is to say, chanting.

I have become an "ace" at spear fishing, an art that is relatively easy. Rachiti is used to me. She has a gay, light-hearted disposition—perhaps because she is the happiest woman in the tribe—and she always has a half-dozen girls in our hut, gossiping and laughing continually.

I spend my days in the jungle, catching butterflies or draining the rubber trees that abound in the nearby territory. The trees were planted by the Indians thirty years ago when the price of rubber was high. The trees are of the Balata variety, and in

the evening I make novelties for the stores in Panama and the Commissaries of the Canal Zone. Since sending them samples, they have ordered several hundred—miniature coconut trees, Indian pirogues, or little donkeys with baskets full of fruit—all made of pure rubber.

I am completely happy. Never have I felt such freedom as since my arrival in Paya. I don't know if the Spanish Revolution is over or if Joe Louis is still champion of the world. But what does it matter?

(Editor's Note: The Spanish Civil War had started only five months previous to this entry in Belbenoit's diary, and Joe Louis didn't become champion until seven months later, on June 22, 1937.)

The nightmare of Guiana is forgotten. The only time I think of Devil's Island is when I read my manuscript or when I call my pet monkey Valent, who is so mischievous that I have named him after the director of the prison!

I have a little tiger kitten named Clemenceau, who follows me around like a dog. He drinks all my canned milk but I expect to get its value back, for I intend to sell him to some tourist on my next trip to Panama.

DECEMBER 15, 1936:

I made a trip to Yape, and my friend Ralph Beardsley lent me a little portable radio that runs on batteries. It's too bad that the batteries last for only a week. In that week I have filled my chicken-yard and have four pigs.

The first evening I wanted to surprise the Indians, so after dark I turned on the radio and received some Panamanian music. From everywhere the Indians came running. They crowded into my house until I thought it would burst. There were so many that I had to take the radio to the Captain's house so everyone could hear.

Then I had an idea. I turned off the radio and explained that the musicians were tired and that they had to be given something to start playing again. An Indian brought a chicken and the radio played for a few minutes. Then it stopped again until another chicken was donated. This continued for a week, until the batteries were dead.

When I went back to Yape I found out that I had to send to Panama for more batteries, which will take several weeks. Nevertheless, I have earned enough to pay for the batteries when they come.

(Editor's Note: "Little" portable radios didn't go on general sale in the United States until 1937, fully six months after this entry in Belbenoit's diary.)

FROM MY DIARY, February 15, 1937:

It has been raining for two days, a torrential rain such as is found only in the tropics, and for two days I have been in the house. Rachiti, lying in her hammock, is singing a never-ending Indian chant that makes me nervous. Valent, my little monkey, is curled up under my blanket. Now and then he gives a little cry and looks at me sadly. For two days I have been bored. And all during these two days I have been thinking about leaving and going on to the United States.

This morning I glanced through my manuscript, then slowly rolled it up in the oilcloth again. Is it going to rot away here?

Last night I dreamed of life in the cities, of civilized people, of motion pictures, of lights. . . . I dreamed of a good dinner, a glass of wine and cigarettes. For days I have had nothing to smoke but plug tobacco, shredded in my pipe.

I have made a decision. I am going to leave—as quickly as possible.

Rachiti? It will mean little to her. I will leave her the house, some chickens, and my remaining supply of lipsticks and beads. She does not love me. Do Indian women ever love? I'm sure she will forget me quickly and take another husband. I have \$250 and I am well rested and able to continue my trip north.

I have a guidebook, "South American Handbook," which I have been studying for several weeks, learning the roads and railroad lines of the Central American countries. I'm sure I will be in the United States before the end of the year if nothing unforeseen occurs. Tomorrow I'll get ready to leave, and in a week I'll be in Panama City.

THE next day I told the Captain of my intention to leave the village. He did not seem surprised, only asked when I would return.

"Some day," I replied.

Then I told Rachiti's family. They were no more surprised than the Captain. They were no longer interested in Rachiti's problems.

When I returned home, Rachiti was cooking dinner.

"I'm going away," I told her.

Her expression did not change. "You hunt butterflies other place?"

"Yes."

"Why you not take me?"

"It's too far. And there are no Indians where I'm going."

She said no more, but calmly continued cooking dinner.

I went out to arrange for José and another Indian to accompany me to Yape, for I wanted to take along two

large pigs which I had promised to Ralph Beardsley.

No one was surprised or disturbed at my sudden decision to leave. They seemed to take it as a matter of course, and I was glad that I had no unpleasant explanations to make.

When I returned to my house for dinner I found Rachiti telling two other girls about my plans, but she was talking gaily, no unhappiness in her manner or voice.

The next morning Rachiti rose early to prepare food for my journey. After taking presents to the Captain and the medicine-man, I came back to tell her good-by.

"I will wait twelve moons," she said calmly. "If you no return, I take other husband."

I kissed her and walked down to the river, a little puzzled at this indifferent fashion of bidding a husband farewell.

The pirogue was ready. José and the other Indian helped me load my pigs and my baggage. The whole village came down to the river to see me off.

I kissed Rachiti for the last time, then pushed off into the stream. I was certainly more moved than she, for as soon as the canoe left the bank she joined a group of girls and began talking and laughing animatedly.

As we passed out of sight around the bend, my heart was full of sadness. Now that I was leaving Rachiti, I realized how much I had become attached to her. Did she miss me? Did she love me? We had never exchanged any words of love. Perhaps there were no Indian love-words. She seemed indifferent to my departure, but was that just the Indian character? Had she been happy with me? I believed so. I had done everything in my power to please her and to make her life easier than that of the other Indian women. She had lacked nothing, and she had never worked as hard as her companions. But was that love, to her? I did not know.

José piloted the canoe, and as we reached Yape late in the afternoon and it was too late to go back to Paya, he spent the night with me at the plantation.

The next morning he left for Paya. He had been my only friend, for we had been able to talk together, and I felt a sense of loss as he disappeared up the river. I had given him several things that were no longer useful to me—my machete, a hunting-knife and all my spare ammunition. I watched him out of sight, but he never waved or turned his head to look back.

That evening I embarked on a banana boat for Panama City, where I arrived the next morning. I had nothing to fear from the authorities now;

I had been advised by the Chief of Police that I could stay in town without danger of arrest.

But I could not stay—not for anything in the world. I had a manuscript that I had read and reread during the long evenings in my Indian hut; a manuscript that to me was a cause; that I must take to the United States—that I must publish. It was a sacred mission, and nothing could deter me.

Other adventures were awaiting me, of that I was sure; other hardships, other disillusionments. But I still had faith that I would succeed. The faith that had brought me this far would help me to go on.

Chapter Seventeen

I LEFT PANAMA in much better condition than when I had arrived the year before. I was well dressed, I now had \$280, and a suitcase full of clothes.

I went to David, capital of Chiriqui Province, by automobile. There I took the train to a little village a few hundred yards from the border. I left the village along a tiny path that led to La Cuesta, in Costa Rica, where I planned to take a plane for San José, the capital of the Republic.

After a week in San José, during which I studied maps to determine the shortest and safest route into Nicaragua, I took the train to Puerto Limón on the Atlantic coast.

I had decided that the best way to reach Nicaragua was to go up the San Juan River to Lake Nicaragua; from here it would be easy for me to get to Managua, the capital. It was a trip of 120 miles by canoe, and I expected to make it in ten days.

My voyage up the river was leisurely and pleasant. I paddled six or seven hours a day, camping at night on the riverbank, or stopping at small settlements where I always received warm hospitality.

On the fifteenth day, I stopped at a house to spend the night, and I learned from my host that it would be easier to reach Lake Nicaragua by land than by continuing on up the river. A mile from his home was a narrow mountain trail which crossed the border and ended on the bank of the lake.

Next morning he accompanied me to the beginning of the trail and assured me that before nightfall I would see the waters of Lake Nicaragua.

I walked all day, but when night came I still had seen no sign of the lake. I was about to halt and build a shelter for the night when I caught sight of a group of four men seated around a campfire some distance away. They saw me at the same

time and quickly grabbed up their guns. I continued on toward them. Their appearance was not reassuring, but I had seen so many fellows of this sort that I was not afraid. I felt sure they were smugglers or petty bandits, such as are often encountered in the border villages of the Central American countries.

"Para tel! Stop!" The burly, bearded leader of the group emphasized the order by shoving the muzzle of his gun against my chest. "Where are you going?" he demanded.

"Nicaragua."

"Why didn't you take the boat to get there?"

"Because I have no passport."

"What are you going to do in Nicaragua?"

"I'm just traveling. I'm on my way to Honduras."

"Are you an American?"

"No—French."

Keeping me covered with his gun, he ordered one of his companions to search me. The man turned my pockets inside out, appropriated the few American dollars I had, then opened my pack and took my spare clothes and a couple of cans of corned beef.

"What do you think of Sandino?" asked the leader, eyeing me belligerently.

I had been warned in Costa Rica to be careful how I responded to any questions about the famous bandit, so without hesitation I replied:

"Sandino? The hero of Nicaragua? Why, there's a statue of him in my home town."

His response so pleased them that they invited me to share their meal. One of them gave me some rice on a banana leaf, while another opened one of my cans of corned beef with his machete.

"Who told you about this trail?" asked the leader.

"A Costa Rican."

He eyed me suspiciously.

On the top of my bundle of manuscript and papers was my scrapbook, containing the articles about me which had been published by the Colombian and Panamanian newspapers. I opened the scrapbook and handed it to the leader, indicating my picture.

He looked at the picture, peered at my face, then exclaimed: "*Caramba!* It's him, all right!" He handed the scrapbook to a comrade and ordered him to read the article.

"Fugitive from Devil's Island arrives in Panama," the man read the headline aloud. "René Belbenoit, fugitive from Devil's Island, the most terrible prison in the world—"

"You escaped from Devil's Island?" interrupted the chief. Then he added

with a puzzled frown: "Where is Devil's Island?"

After I told him, he naturally wanted to know what I had done to be put in jail.

"Nothing much—just killed three policemen," I lied nonchalantly.

"*Caramba!*" he exclaimed. "*Metos tres policas!*" He clapped me admiringly on the back, almost knocking me into the fire. "Why did you kill them?"

"They jumped me while I was robbing a bank," I replied.

"How much did you steal?"

"Seventy-five thousand dollars."

"What did you do with the money?"

"Hid it."

They all regarded me with great respect, apparently satisfied that I was a big-shot gangster such as they had seen in the movies.

"Tell us your story," urged the leader, lighting a cigarette for me.

I had weighed my men as we had been talking, and I had reached the conclusion that they were small-time smugglers running cheap contraband between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. They were simple rascals, and I felt that if I could impress them with my importance in the criminal world I might be able to make them return my money and spare clothes.

So I told them a fantastic story of my robbery of a Paris bank, the sudden appearance of several squads of police who had been tipped off by a stool-pigeon, my getaway in a high-powered auto with the police cars in pursuit, a running fight with machine-guns, etc. When my car crashed into a telephone pole and overturned, I told them, I fled on foot across an open field and managed to hide my bags of loot in an abandoned well before the police finally captured me.

I talked for an hour, holding the bandits spellbound. They would have let me talk all night without interruption.

At the conclusion of my story, they insisted that I tell them how I had escaped from Devil's Island.

Two months before I had seen Paul Muni in the film "I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang," so I related a wild tale of my escape, embellishing my actual adventures with scenes from the movie. As I talked, I began to find Paul Muni's escape considerably more exciting than my own.

When I finished, I was a hero to the bandits. The psychological moment had arrived.

"Give me back my money and clothes!" I demanded, scowling.

Meekly they returned my American dollars and my spare clothes. I retied the clothing in my pack and lay down beside the fire. The leader shared his blanket with me and soon I was asleep.

After coffee next morning, we continued along the trail and arrived shortly at the top of a mountain, from which vantage-point we could see the waters of Lake Nicaragua in the distance.

Late in the afternoon we reached a small village which was my companions' destination. The time had come to say good-by. Although the bandits were full of admiration for my exploits, I had the feeling that they were anxious to part company with such a desperate criminal.

I continued on to a little town on Lake Nicaragua, where I boarded a boat for Managua. I arrived in the capital the following morning and there took a train in the direction of the Honduran border.

Chapter Eighteen

I HAD NO TROUBLE CROSSING the border between Nicaragua and Honduras, for by now I knew all the tricks. The only difficulty was that I had to cut across the jungle in order to avoid the traveled routes and settled areas where I might possibly be apprehended. The jungle was so dense that I was compelled to hack my way through, and by the time I was across the border I was almost dead from fatigue.

On May 2, 1937, exactly two years after I had left the Guiana Penal Colony, I arrived at dusk on the outskirts of the little Honduran village of San Ramón.

Since the presence of a stranger in such a small community would naturally attract considerable attention, I

decided to camp overnight on the edge of the village. I was very hungry, however, and, as night had fallen and the single street of the village was practically deserted, I took a chance and went into a store to buy some food. I had no Honduran money with which to pay the woman storekeeper, so I offered her an American dollar bill.

She looked at it suspiciously, turning it over and over, then told me to wait, and went out. I thought she had gone to ask a neighbor the value of the bill, but when she returned she was accompanied by a policeman.

"Where do you come from?" he demanded.

"From Nicaragua," I told him.

"Have you a passport or identification card?"

I shook my head.

"You will have to come with me," he ordered.

He took me to a small barracks which served as the village prison and locked me up. Fortunately he did not confiscate my pack, but only examined it to make sure I carried no firearms. He told me that in the morning he would take me to Pedregal, where the authorities would make a disposition of my case.

I was concerned for fear that after being taken to Pedregal, the officials there might send me to Tegucigalpa, the capital, where I might have to spend a week or two in prison awaiting a decision as to my status. This would be precious time lost. I had hoped to be in Salvador in four days, cross that little country in forty-eight hours, and then travel quickly across Guatemala, where the roads were



better and more numerous than in the countries I had passed through.

After the policeman left, I looked around the little wooden barracks in which I was confined. It did not appear to be too substantial, and only the door separated me from freedom. But if I attempted to break it down, the noise would surely be heard by the policeman, whose house was only a short distance away.

I had to get out—but how? It was now so dark that I could scarcely see. I stumbled around in the gloom, tapping the walls in search of a weak spot. There was none. I got down on my knees and examined the base of the rear wall which extended a foot or so down into the dirt floor. Here the boards had rotted a little, but they were still too strong to break through. I would have to dig down under the bottom of the partition. The ground was so hard-packed and rocky, however, that I was unable to scoop out a hole with my bare hands. I needed some digging implement.

I LIGHTED a precious match and looked all around the barracks. Nothing! Then, just as the match flickered out, I saw the head of a big rusty nail projecting from the ceiling. I tugged and twisted at it for more than an hour, and finally managed to work it loose. This was my tool.

I started to dig a hole in the dirt floor at the bottom of the rear wall. It was then about nine o'clock. For over two hours I dug with the nail, like some small animal burrowing into the ground. But the work was terribly slow and laborious. My arms ached and my fingernails were cracked and bleeding. Suddenly I struck a big stone. If only I could remove it! I began digging around it and after an hour succeeded in unearthing it.

I pulled the rock out and saw that the hole was now underneath the bottom of the wall. My task was easier now, for the earth outside the wall was quite soft. I encountered small stones which I removed easily and thus facilitated my work.

At last I was able to put my hand under the partition and feel the emptiness outside. But the hole was still too small to permit me to crawl through. It required several more hours of digging. I had lost all track of time and I was fearful that dawn would soon come, and with it the policeman to take me to Pedregal.

Desperately I continued digging until I judged that the hole was large enough for me to crawl through. I tried to push my pack through the opening ahead of me, but it was too bulky. I discarded my spare clothes and everything else but my manuscript and scrapbook and again tried

to force the bundle through the hole. This time I succeeded. I quickly wriggled through after it. I was free!

I began walking rapidly in the direction of Pedregal, which was almost six miles away. It was daybreak when I reached there. Cautiously I circled around the town and pressed on toward the border of Salvador.

Two days later I arrived at San Miguel, several miles inside the border. There I took the train for La Libertad, a little port on the Pacific.

One less country to cross, I thought. . . .

Wandering aimlessly along the wharf of La Libertad, I contemplated my next move. The border of Guatemala was over a hundred miles away. Could I walk that far in my weakened condition? I doubted it. And even if I managed to reach the border—what then? How would I journey across Guatemala and Mexico? By bus or train, perhaps? But how could I pay the fare, with only six American dollars in my pocket? More than fifteen hundred miles lay between me and my goal—the United States. Could I possibly walk the entire distance if I took my time and allowed myself plenty of rest between each stage of the journey? I shook my head. No, it was too much.

I was about to look for some place to spend the night when I noticed a freighter anchored a half-mile offshore. Smoke was coming out of the funnel and apparently it was soon to leave. Moored alongside the wharf was a barge which stevedores were loading with bags of coffee to be taken out to the ship. I went closer and saw that the bags were stenciled, "Canada."

Instantly some inner voice, some sixth sense which seems to guide all hunted creatures, told me that if I hoped ever to reach the United States, I had to get aboard that ship out there in the harbor. I had to!

I hurried into a grocery store and bought some chocolate candy-bars, a box of crackers, and several packs of cigarettes. Then I went into a restaurant, ordered a big meal and ate all I could hold.

Hastening back to the wharf, I saw that the barge was ready to leave. Some of the stevedores were going aboard to unload the bags of coffee on the ship. Without hesitation, I followed them.

The barge, drawn by a tug, started toward the ship. I huddled down in a corner, trying to make myself as inconspicuous as possible. Nobody paid any attention to me, however. Apparently they thought I was one of the sailors returning to the ship after shore-leave.

Night was falling when the barge reached the ship and I went aboard

with the stevedores. The forward deck was being lighted for the loading of the coffee, so I quickly made my way to the stern. There I saw a small compartment which housed the servo-motor steering mechanism. The door was open; I glanced around to make sure I was unobserved, then slipped inside.

The compartment was so cluttered with machinery that I could find no place to hide.

I was about to leave when I saw a trapdoor in the floor. I lifted it. A ladder led down into a small hold in which coils of hawsers and wire cables were stored. It was dimly lighted by a single electric bulb. I descended the ladder, closing the trapdoor behind me, and hid behind a big coil of rope. There I waited tensely, wondering what would happen to me if I were caught.

Hours passed. Then I felt the vibration of the ship's engines and heard the clanging of the rudder chains in the compartment above. We were getting under way!

Suddenly the trapdoor opened. Two sailors came down the ladder into the hold. I held my breath and crouched lower behind the coil of rope. Had they come to make the customary search for possible stowaways before the ship cleared port? Would they discover me? Then, as they stepped into the feeble rays cast by the electric bulb, I saw to my relief that they carried some loose rope, which they now began to coil up. They finished after a few minutes, went back up the ladder and closed the trapdoor again. The electric light was extinguished, plunging the hold into darkness.

I took off my pants and shirt, rolled them up so they would not get dirty, and composed myself for sleep.

WHEN I awakened, I looked up and saw light filtering through a small opening, apparently a ventilator.

It was day. I estimated that about twelve hours had passed since our departure from La Libertad. Twelve hours at twelve miles an hour would be approximately 150 miles, so by now we were cruising along the coast of Guatemala. Another country passed, I told myself.

I ate some chocolate and lighted a cigarette. I smoked only a little for I feared the odor of the tobacco might be detected, should someone come into the room above.

The solitude was not hard to bear. Alas, I had the habit of solitude—four of my twelve years in the Guiana Penal Colony had been spent in the awful black loneliness of the solitary cells.

I fell asleep. When I awoke, the little hole above me was black. Night had come again. Twenty-four

hours at sea, I calculated, at twelve miles an hour—we had made about three hundred miles. Tomorrow we would be cruising along the coast of Mexico.

The second day passed; another night came. I had eaten my small supply of food and was hungry and thirsty. It was possible that the ship would not put in at a port for several days more—perhaps even a week. I had to solve the problem of food and drink.

As a youth I had served as an engine-helper on French ships, and I remembered that at night the deck of a ship usually was deserted, except during the change of watch. It might not be too great a risk to go above.

I waited until I thought it would be well past midnight, then went up the ladder and through the trapdoor into the compartment which contained the steering mechanism. I opened the door and peered out onto the deck. All was dark except for the two running-lights on the funnel.

Cautiously I made my way forward to the officers' messroom. It was deserted. I found a basket of bread and two carafes of water on the table, and some fruit in the icebox. I wrapped the food in a towel, drank one of the carafes of water, and poured the other into a can. Then I picked up a few cigarette butts from the floor and stole back to my hiding-place.

Days passed. I estimated that it was now one week since we had left La Libertad. At three hundred miles a day, we should be nearing the coast of the United States. Would the ship put into some port there, or continue on to Canada? In the latter case I would be faced with the problem of getting back to the United States.

And even if I succeeded, what would I do then? If I went to the newspapers and told them my story in an effort to obtain funds, as I had done in South and Central America, the resultant publicity about my case would of course come to the attention of the authorities. Would they deport me? I knew the immigration laws were very strict. All the Americans I had met in Panama and elsewhere had warned me that I had no chance and that I would be deported—if not to Guiana, to France, which would amount to the same thing.

But I had hope. I had faith in my lucky star. It had not failed me up to now.

The next morning I was awakened by the blast of the ship's whistle. Were we arriving at some port? The vibration of the ship ceased. The engines had stopped. I knew then that we must be in port, for the ship would not stop in the open sea.

With the little water I had left, I washed and shaved. I put my pants and shirt on again. I went up into the machinery-room, and through a porthole I saw land. There was no sign of a city, only barren hills covered with hundreds of oil derricks. This must be Mexico, I thought.

I went out on deck and over to the rail. A group of stevedores were unloading the bags of coffee from the ship's hold. A few of the stevedores appeared to be Americans, but most of them looked like Mexicans.

Now I saw several members of the ship's crew starting down the gangplank. Cautiously I edged along the rail toward it. On the wharf at the bottom of the gangplank stood a man who seemed to be some sort of official. He stopped the sailors, patted their clothes as if searching for contraband, asked them a few questions which I could not hear, then let them pass.

A train came into view along the wharf, evidently to take on a load of coffee. As it drew nearer, I saw that the freight cars were marked "New York Central," "Pennsylvania," etc. I realized that I was in the United States, and that the official was an immigration officer. My heart beat faster; between me and freedom stood only one man.

I had traveled almost 6000 miles. I had crossed the countries of South and Central America. I had gambled my life on the seas in a scrap of a boat. I had fought my way through the jungle where no white man had ever passed before. I had struggled for two years against the elements, against nature, against man.

I had only a few feet to go to reach my goal. A few feet! A few seconds more! Only one obstacle—this man standing at the bottom of the gangway. If I passed him, it meant life, a new future, freedom. If I failed, it was jail, deportation to France, return to Devil's Island, three years of hard labor for attempted escape. In a word—Death!

Should I venture down the gangplank? Dare I? Suddenly one of the ship's officers started down. For a second I hesitated; then, mustering all my courage, I followed him. He paused at the foot of the gangway to exchange a few words with the immigration official, then went on his way.

The official turned to me. I raised my arms, as I had seen the sailors do, so he could search me. He ran his hands up and down my body. He looked at me a little uncertainly; apparently he thought I was a member of the ship's crew, but was not quite sure. My heart pounded. Then, after what seemed a year, he nodded dismissively.

Affecting a nonchalant manner, I began walking across the wharf. I

came to a gate, and to my alarm saw another official stationed there. Automatically I lifted my arms so he could search me, then opened my bundle of manuscript and papers for his inspection when he motioned me to do so. On top was my scrapbook. He opened it and glanced at the first page, on which I had pasted some photographs of Panama City.

"Nice place, Panama," he said, handing the scrapbook back to me.

I tied up my bundle and stepped through the gate. My eyes were so misty that I could scarcely see and my legs felt as if they were going to buckle under me. I stumbled on for a few feet and collided with a big dockworker. I mumbled an apology, then asked him where I was. He stared at me as if he thought I was either drunk or crazy. I repeated my question.

"You're in Los Angeles, you dope!" he said, shaking his head.

Los Angeles! I was the happiest man in the world. At last I had arrived in the United States!

Chapter Nineteen

IN CIVILIZATION, people seem to be so busy observing so many complex laws that they have little or no time to observe the few simple laws of hospitality.

When I was walking along the beaches of Colombia, or along the trails of Nicaragua or Honduras, if I became hungry I had only to stop at the first village I saw, and the inhabitants would give me something to eat. When night came, I had but to knock on the door of the first house I encountered, and the owner would immediately prepare a place for me to sleep.

Nobody asked me who I was, where I came from, or where I was going. I was a traveler, and I was welcome. My ragged clothes and my empty wallet made no difference to the simple people who gave me of their food and shelter.

When I arrived in downtown Los Angeles on the street-car from the harbor, I soon realized I could not expect to be treated as I had been in the little villages of South and Central America. It was not that anybody was unfriendly or unkind toward me. It was just that they ignored me.

I stood on a corner and watched the people as they hurried past. Everybody seemed to have some place to go or something to do. Everybody looked prosperous. Everybody was so well dressed that I was ashamed of my shabby appearance.

I began walking, not knowing where I was going, wondering what I should do. I was broke, hungry, and

weak from my long confinement in the ship's hold.

After wandering around for what seemed hours, I saw an office building with a big sign: "*Los Angeles Examiner*." I went in, asked to speak with a reporter, and told him my story briefly. He was not interested; he seemed to think the arrival in California of a fugitive from Devil's Island was an everyday occurrence.

I tried the "*Los Angeles Times*." They listened politely to my story, but when I left I was no richer than when I came in.

I went into a drugstore and looked up the address of the French Consul in the telephone-book. Fortunately, it was within walking distance. Half an hour later I was explaining my situation to the Consul. He gave me fifty cents and advised me to keep my story out of the newspapers.

A cup of coffee, two doughnuts and a pack of cigarettes—and the fifty cents was gone.

Night was coming. I was now in the Mexican quarter, where at least my ragged appearance would cause no comment. I sat on a bench in the Plaza and picked up a Spanish newspaper, "*La Opinion*." I decided to try my luck there.

After I explained my situation to the editor of "*La Opinion*" and showed him my scrapbook, he had me write an article about my adventures, for which he paid me \$15.

That night I slept in a cheap hotel room. Next morning I went to Hollywood. Four years before, Samuel Goldwyn had produced a film based on Blair Niles' book, "*Condemned to Devil's Island*." As I was the prin-

cipal character of the book, I thought that the studio might be interested in my story. But there were so many policemen at the studio gate that I was afraid to go in.

Since I had tried everything in Los Angeles, I decided to go to San Francisco. With the money I had left, I bought a bus ticket. On my arrival in San Francisco I made the rounds of the newspapers, but with no more success than I had had in Los Angeles.

Broke and hungry, I was desperate. I went to the French Consul. He listened to my story, then phoned to one of his friends and asked him to see if he could get some sort of job for me.

That evening I had a job as a dishwasher at Ripley's, a French restaurant in the Chinese quarter. I worked there for two weeks.

One morning the owner's son came in with a copy of "*The American Weekly*." He handed it to me, indicating the featured article, and watched me silently as I read it. The article, titled "The Most Hunted Man," was an account of my adventures which had been written by William LaVarre, the explorer, whom I had met in Panama.

I had given my real name to my employer, but since he had never inquired into my background, I had never found it necessary to mention the fact that I was a fugitive from Devil's Island.

I readily admitted the truth of the article, even though I expected that it would mean my dismissal. But to my surprise and relief, the owner's son, the owner, and everybody else in the restaurant treated me as a hero

from that day on. The chef prepared special French delicacies for me, the owner's son gave me clothes, and the waiters, most of whom were French, showed me the sights of the city.

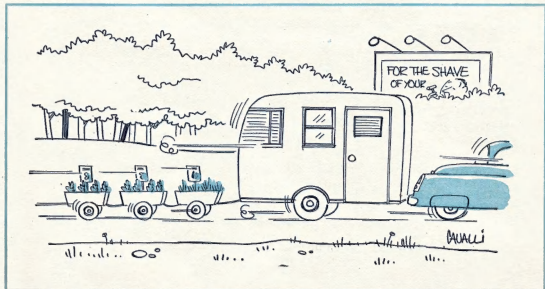
I wrote to William LaVarre and told him of my arrival in the United States. He sent me money for my transportation to New York, where I arrived on July 5, 1937, exactly twenty-six months and three days after my departure from Devil's Island.

The next morning, accompanied by William LaVarre, I entered the office of "*The New York Times*" to tell my story.

LaVarre had warned me that I was taking a great risk. "Tonight your story and picture will appear on the front pages of most of the newspapers of the United States. The Department of Immigration will know of your arrival in this country. Your chances of staying here are almost nil. Think well about what you are going to do."

My decision was already made. I had crossed the entire American continent without changing my name and usually without trying to conceal that I was a fugitive from Devil's Island. Now that I had reached my goal, I had no intention of backing up. I had succeeded in my escape because I had faith in my cause—faith that had given me the courage to face the sea and the jungle—faith that had given me the strength to overcome the countless difficulties and dangers that stood between me and freedom.

A few minutes later William LaVarre was introducing me to the newspapermen: "This is René Belbenoit, fugitive from Devil's Island..." •



RELAX and ENJOY

MOVIES



Science-Fiction: *Invaders from Mars* (20th Century-Fox). Without any big names, this imaginative yarn is full of suspense and excellent special effects that heighten the sense of reality, rather than destroy it. The story is basically simple and atmosphere is used very shrewdly to make it even stronger. The invaders' arrival in a nearby sand-pit is seen during a thunder-

storm by a twelve-year-old boy, who persuades his parents to investigate. They return grim and uncommunicative, a frightening contrast to their usual high spirits. Stunned by this mysterious change, the boy goes to the police and struggles to persuade them to investigate. From this point, the suspense gradually mounts until finally the Army surrounds the pit and routs the menacing Martians. This basic patriotism story is intriguing in its unspoken implications—what would happen if such a thing were to occur in real life and were witnessed only by a young boy? Would anyone believe him before it was too late?

Sea: *Titanic* (20th Century-Fox). The sinking of the supposedly unsinkable H.M.S. *Titanic* is the factual background for this fictional story, and the impending tragedy provides an automatic suspense and contrast to the normal activities of the unsuspecting passengers. The final thirty minutes, after the collision with the jagged iceberg spur has ripped through the hull, are the film's best and are strong screen drama, hitting hard at the emotions as frightened but brave people respond to the dangers and characters are molded in crisis.

TELEVISION



Psychological: Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. has gone to England for his *TV Theatre* and come back with an excellent show. Well-written and excellently acted by British casts with the usual British understatement, nearly all of the plays have a slightly psychological twist good enough to lift them well above the usual

level of television dramas. The attention to details of character, mood and setting we've come to expect in better British movies are all present in this series, and it's a welcome change from the "hit-them-over-the-head" school of television.

Adventure: A good new show is one starring—surprisingly enough for an adventure show—Adolphe Menjou as narrator and bit player in *Favorite Story*. The stories are action-adventure yarns, set in all periods and all over the map, supported by acting and directing that are both imaginative and competent.

BOOKS



Cavalry: *The Restless Border* (Lippincott, \$3.00) by Dick Pearce. When Captain Alexander Prince of the U. S. Army was sent to the United States-Texas border, soon after Texas freed itself from Mexico, he had secret orders to give the new Republic all possible help, without straining neutrality too far. This is an ex-

citing tale of intrigue and Indian warfare, the drama of the frontier by a writer with a flair for narrative and historical accuracy. This book was serialized under the title, *Comanche Attack*.

Historical: *The Dark Angel* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$3.75) by Mika Waltari. When Constantinople fell to the Turks five hundred years ago, all Christendom was shaken to its foundations and the fruits of centuries of culture were destroyed. Yet in the brave last stand of a few devoted men, the West gained a victory of the spirit. It would be difficult to find either a period or a theme better suited to the talents of the author of *The Egyptian*, and this equally vivid novel has an added timeliness today, when civilization is once again threatened from the East.

Foreign Intrigue: *The Return of Lanny Budd* (Viking Press, \$4.00) by Upton Sinclair. With *O Shepherd, Speak!* Upton Sinclair announced that his series of Lanny Budd books was completed. But global events since the end of World War II have prompted him to write another long and absorbing novel of Lanny's exploits. Readers will find in the book a good deal of behind-the-scenes information on the disturbed European countries today, and as always Sinclair writes vividly authentic history along with adventure fiction of a high order.

RECORDS



Songs: Most spectacular among the new records from television is the complete *Calendar Show*, an hour-long production by Arthur Godfrey and the group of performers billed as his "Friends." Twelve original songs by Joan Edwards and Lyn Duddy, each song representing one month of the year, make this an interesting capsule musical comedy. (Columbia)

Patter: Wally Cox, often considered to be one of the funniest men around, makes his disc debut with his famous monologue about *Dufo* (*What a Crazy Guy*). If gentle, off-beat humor with a touch of violence is your dish, don't pass this one up. It bids fair to become a classic of American humor. (RCA Victor) NOTE: All records are available on all three speeds.

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

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JULY

THE BIG MOGUL OF MUSCLE

150 million Americans have never heard of Bob Hoffman, but as the mahatma of weightlifting, he almost started World War III.

PLUS

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Hair the Color of Blood—page 61

Let's Live in a Trailer! — page 68

